

GRAND VALLEY STATE COLLEGES

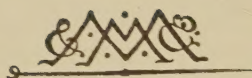


THE GIFT OF

Gerald A. Elliott

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

WITHDRAWN



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The Poetical Works
of
Wilfrid Scawen Blunt

A COMPLETE EDITION

IN TWO VOLUMES

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DEDICATION TO GEORGE WYNDHAM

TO A HAPPY WARRIOR

GLORY to God who made a man like this !
To God be praise who in the empty heaven
Set Earth's gay globe
With its green vesture given
And nuptial robe
To be the home enthroned of happiness !
Who from the silences
Of the dumb Universe,
For listening ears,
Constructed song
And fashioned the first note
Of the first linnet's throat,
His audible whisper the deep woods among !
Who, with His dance-masters,
The dappled deer
And their fleet fawns,
With rhythmic beat
Of their light feet
Upon the thyme-sweet lawns,
Framed the free gamut of the wakening year
And gave command to mirth His minister
That all things young and glad
And mad,
In this fair world's expanse
Should dance !
Praise be ! and most for these,

TO A HAPPY WARRIOR

The lyric ecstasies
Sublime in each least lot,
The passionate plot
Subtly contrived to propagate their kind
By beast and bird and in Man's livelier mind
To make of life new life,
Of joy new joy, in corporal bliss
Entwined,
Man's who is man and wife,
Though neither he have thought
Nor she, in their love blind,
Of that child's smile
Half hers half his
Unborn, the while
They clasp and kiss !
These are the vastnesses
That bid us give God glory for his depths of guile.

And he ? The ultimate man,
The heir of their delight,
Whose keener sight
Grasped the full vision of Time's master-plan,
And who, because he knew,
Found power to do
What the rest dared not and was thus the priest
Of the divine high feast
Of Love on Earth ? Poet, whose prosody
Embraced heaven's infinite blue
And the white light of stars,
The moon's proud chastity
And the sea beating on its prison bars ;
Whose ritual
Was the procession of the months and days
In ordered praise
Of ceremonial flowers, Earth's virginal

Patchwork of shredded colours in the grass ;
Whose incense was
The mist of morning, and whose sacrifice
The sun in splendour by whose light all live ?
How shall we give
To one thus wise
Our homage who so loved him and alas
Now weep for him with unavailing eyes ?

For what is wisdom more than this one thought,
To harvest happiness ? Time has its wheat,
Its rule of life discreet,
By scholars taught,
For daily bread ; and its weeds too,
Its wild crop of the woods which is not bought,
Its way that fools call folly,
Choke-pear, crab, holly,
All the riot
Of the bird's diet,
For maid and boy,
Their winter-pick of joy,
If they but knew !
And these to learn and gather in their prime
Is youth's sublime.

Here lay his victory. Not flowers alone
Nor fruits were his,
But the world's sadnesses
He gathered also, its loves lost and gone,
The tragic things that are
As the maple leaves
Of the fast dying year,
Crowning its funeral car,
The glory of its passing set on fire
In the late hedges,

The wreathed bryony
Black with the Autumn saltings of the Sea,
And those lone sedges at the lake's edges
Which winter winds have whitened on the mere.
These, as the symbols of his Soul's romance
In antique lands,
He bound into the sheaves
Of his desire,
A wreath,
Nobler for death.
Of these he fashioned a new chivalry
For days to be,
Incorporate with the glories of all Time,
The immortal rhyme
Of Roland and the paladins of France,
Of Charlemagne,
The Cid Bivar of Spain,
And those proud questers of the Holy Grail
Who rode with Arthur *cap à pie* in mail,
Till in his hands
It seemed the actual lance
Of Lancelot trembled and took edge and shook
Defiance at his foes in Lyonesse,
No less than those
Of whom it is written in the old French book
That he pursued and slew and scattering rent
Their ranks in fear,
While the Earth trembled his glad shout to hear.
So he in his high rage in Parliament.

Anon, too, at the feasts
Where with the knights and ladies crowned he sat,
Their laureate
Of that famed Table Round, its pleasure's lord,
His was the tongue

To celebrate their praise,
Theirs the adored,
With virile minstrelsy and mirth and song,
And generous wine
Outpoured
In draughts divine from flagons
Rich with the mellow fruitage of the vine ;
His was the tongue
To tell of valorous deeds
Done for high honour's needs
On pestilent dragons in dank forest places
Vanquished and slain, and felon knights laid low,
For fair loved faces
In days long ago ;
Amorous sad tales of dolorous mistakes
At hands that sought to save ;
Ancient heart-aches,
Each laid to rest in its forgotten grave.
And with them griefs, which venturing found their hour,
Fruitage and flower,
And were fulfilled of joy ;—and chiefly hers,
Royal sad Guinevere's
Noblest of all among the tragic dead.
Of her he loved to tell.
And he did well ;
For she, the lady of his dreams, one night,
As it is said,
In Glastonbury,
Hearing his young steps hurry
As to a goal,
To kneel at her dead feet,
Where as she lay with her sleep-folded palms
In the long calms
Of a passed soul,
Did from her cerements white

Awake,
And feel her passionate heart beat
To his desire,
And in new bride's attire
Arise and live a woman for his sake,
A woman and no dream.
These were the rhapsodies of life to him,
The things that his heart's zeal
Made real.

And who shall wonder if to-day we weep
Our Prince of happiness,
Our warrior dead ?
If we, who saw
These wonders beyond law,
And his proud soul's essay
To live the great life of the Fellowship
In our late day,
Should mourn him fled,
Yet, none the less,
Give praise
To God, with chastened but undoubting lip,
For this exemplar of His works and ways ?
Since that we know that in His scheme of bliss
No permanent anguish is,
But beauty only and high ruth and truth,
And that Life's law is this :
Pleasure is duty, duty pleasure
In equal measure ;
And Time's happiness
God's all-sufficient reason with the wise,
As with this man
Who sleeps in Paradise.

THE OLD SQUIRE

I

I LIKE the hunting of the hare
Better than that of the fox ;
I like the joyous morning air,
And the crowing of the cocks.

II

I like the calm of the early fields,
The ducks asleep by the lake,
The quiet hour which Nature yields,
Before mankind is awake.

III

I like the pheasants and feeding things
Of the unsuspecting morn ;
I like the flap of the wood-pigeon's wings
As she rises from the corn.

IV

I like the blackbird's shriek, and his rush
From the turnips as I pass by,
And the partridge hiding her head in a bush,
For her young ones cannot fly.

V

I like these things, and I like to ride,
When all the world is in bed,
To the top of the hill where the sky grows wide,
And where the sun grows red.

VI

The beagles at my horse heels trot,
In silence after me ;
There's Ruby, Roger, Diamond, Dot,
Old Slut and Margery,

VII

A score of names well used, and dear,
The names my childhood knew ;
The horn, with which I rouse their cheer,
Is the horn my father blew.

VIII

I like the hunting of the hare
Better than that of the fox ;
The new world still is all less fair
Than the old world it mocks.

IX

I covet not a wider range
Than these dear manors give ;
I take my pleasures without change,
And as I lived I live.

X

I leave my neighbours to their thought ;
My choice it is, and pride,
On my own lands to find my sport,
In my own fields to ride.

XI

The hare herself no better loves
The field where she was bred,
Than I the habit of these groves,
My own inherited.

XII

I know my quarries every one,
The meuse where she sits low ;
The road she chose to-day was run
A hundred years ago.

XIII

The lags, the gills, the forest ways,
The hedgerows one and all,
These are the kingdoms of my chase,
And bounded by my wall ;

XIV

Nor has the world a better thing,
Though one should search it round,
Than thus to live one's own sole king,
Upon one's own sole ground.

XV

I like the hunting of the hare ;
It brings me, day by day,
The memory of old days as fair,
With dead men past away.

XVI

To these, as homeward still I ply
And pass the churchyard gate,
Where all are laid as I must lie,
I stop and raise my hat.

XVII

I like the hunting of the hare ;
New sports I hold in scorn.
I like to be as my fathers were,
In the days ere I was born.

WORTH FOREST

COME, Prudence, you have done enough to-day—
The worst is over, and some hours of play
We both have earned, even more than rest, from toil ;
Our minds need laughter, as a spent lamp oil,
And after their long fast a recompense.
How sweet the evening is with its fresh scents
Of briar and fern distilled by the warm wind !
How green a robe the rain has left behind !
How the birds laugh !—What say you to a walk
Over the hill, and our long promised talk
About the rights and wrongs of infancy ?
Our patients are asleep, dear angels, she
Holding the boy in her ecstatic arms,
As mothers do, and free from past alarms,
The child grown calm. If we, an hour or two,
Venture to leave them, 'tis but our hope's due.
My tongue is all agog to try its speed
To a new listener, like a long-stalled steed
Loosed in a meadow, and the Forest lies
At hand, the theme of its best flatteries.
See, Prudence, here, your hat, where it was thrown
The night you found me in the house alone
With my worst fear and these two helpless things.
Please God, that worst has folded its black wings,
And we may let our thoughts on pleasure run
Some moments in the light of this good sun.

They sleep in Heaven's guard. Our watch to-night
Will be the braver for a transient sight—
The only one perhaps more fair than they—
Of Nature dressed for her June holiday.

This is the watershed between the Thames
And the South coast. On either hand the streams
Run to the great Thames valley and the sea,
The Downs, which should oppose them, servilely
Giving them passage. Who would think these Downs,
Which look like mountains when the sea-mist crowns
Their tops in autumn, were so poor a chain ?
Yet they divide no pathways for the rain,
Nor store up waters, in this pluvius age,
More than the pasteboard barriers of a stage.
The crest lies here. From us the Medway flows
To drain the Weald of Kent, and hence the Ouse
Starts for the Channel at Newhaven. Both
These streams run eastward, bearing North and South.
But, to the West, the Adur and the Arun
Rising together, like twin rills of Sharon,
Go forth diversely, this through Shoreham gap,
And that by Arundel to Ocean's lap.
All are our rivers, by our Forest bred,
And one besides which with more reverend heed
We need to speak, for her desert is great
Beyond the actual wealth of her estate.
For Spenser sang of her, the River Mole,
And Milton knew her name, though he, poor soul,
Had never seen her, as I think being blind,
And so miscalled her sullen. Others find
Her special merit to consist in this :
A maiden coyness, and her shy device
Of mole-like burrowing. And in truth her way
Is hollowed out and hidden from the day,

Under deep banks and the dark overgrowth
Of knotted alder roots and stumps uncouth,
From source to mouth ; and once at Mickleham,
She fairly digs her grave, in deed and name,
And disappears. There is an early trace
Of this propensity to devious ways
Shown by the little tributary brook
Which bounds our fields, for lately it forsook
Its natural course, to burrow out a road
Under an ash tree in its neighbourhood.
But whether this a special virtue is,
Or like some virtues but a special vice,
We need not argue. This at least is true,
That in the Mole are trout, and many too,
As I have often proved with rod and line
From boyhood up, blest days of pins and twine !
How many an afternoon have our hushed feet
Crept through the alders where the waters meet,
Mary's and mine, and our eyes viewed the pools
Where the trout lay, poor unsuspecting fools,
And our hands framed their doom,—while over-
head

His orchestra of birds the backbird led.
In those lost days, no angler of them all
Could boast our cunning with the bait let fall,
Close to their snouts, from some deceiving coigne,
Or mark more notches when we stopped to join
Our fishes head to tail and lay them out
Upon the grass, and count our yards of trout.
'Twas best in June, with the brook growing clear
After a shower, as now. In dark weather
It was less certain angling, for the stream
Was truly "sullen" then, so deep and dim.
'Tis thus in mountain lakes, as some relate,
Where the fish need the sun to see the bait,

The fly takes nothing in these tangled brooks,
But grief to fishermen and loss of hooks ;
And all our angling was of godless sort,
With living worm,—and yet we loved the sport.

But wait. This path will lead us to the gill,
Where you shall see the Mole in her first rill,
Ere yet she leaves the Forest, and her bed
Is still of iron-stone, which stains her red,
Yet keeps her pure and lends a pleasant taste
To her young waters as they bubble past.
You hear her lapping round the barren flanks
Of these old heaps we call the “ Cinder-banks,”
Where our forefathers forged their iron ore,
When Paul’s was building. Now, the rabbits bore
In the still nights, beneath these ancient heaps,
A very honeycomb. See, where she peeps,
The infant river. You could hardly wet
Your ankles in her midmost eddy yet.
She has a pretty cunning in her look
Mixed with alarm, as in her secret nook
We find her out, half fugitive, half brave,
A look that all the Forest creatures have.
Let us away. Perhaps her guilelessness
Is troubled at a guilty human face,
(Mine, Prudence,—not your own).

I know a dell
Knee deep in fern, hard by, the very cell
For an elf hermit. Here stag-mosses grow,
Thick as a coverlet, and fox-gloves blow
Purple and white, and the wild columbine,
And here in May there springs that thing divine,
The lily of the valley, only here
Found in the Forest, blossoming year on year ;

A place o'ershadowed by a low-crowned oak.
The enchanted princess never had been woke
If she had gone to sleep in such a spot,
In spite of fortune. Why, a corpse forgot
Might lie, with eyes appealing to the sky,
Unburied here for half a century.
And this the woodcocks, as I take it, knew,
Who stayed to breed here all the summer through,
When other birds were gone. I flushed a pair
On the longest day last year; the nest was there;
And found some egg-shells chipped among the moss.
The sight is rarer now than once it was.

There! We have gathered breath and climbed the hill,
And now can view the landscape more at will.
This is the Pilgrim road, a well-known track,
When folk did all their travelling on horseback,
Now long deserted, yet a right of way,
And marked on all our maps with due display.
Beneath this yew-tree, which perhaps has seen
Our fathers riding to St. Thomas' shrine,
(For this was once the way of pilgrimage
From the south-west for all who would engage
Their vows at Canterbury), we will sit,
As doubtless they too sat, and rest a bit.
I love this solitude of birch and fern,
These quags and mosses, and I love the stern
Black yew-trees and the hoary pastures bare,
Or tufted with long growths of withered hair
And rank marsh grass. I love the bell-heath's bloom,
And the wild wealth which passionate Earth's womb
Throws in the Forest's lap to clothe unseen
Its ancient barrenness with youth and green.
I love the Forest; 'tis but this one strip
Along the watershed that still dares keep

Its title to such name. Yet once wide grown
 A mighty woodland stretched from Down to Down,
 The last stronghold and desperate standing-place
 Of that indigenous Britannie race
 Which fell before the English. It was called
 By Rome "Anderida," in Saxon "Weald."
 Time and decay, and Man's relentless mood,
 Have long made havock of the lower wood
 With axe and plough; and now, of all the plain,
 These breadths of higher ground alone remain,
 In token of its presence. Who shall tell
 How long, in these lost wilds of brake and fell,
 Or in the tangled groves of oak below,
 Gathering his sacred leaf, the mistletoe,
 Some Druid priest, forgotten and in need,
 May here have kept his rite and owned his creed
 After the rest? For hardly yet less rude,
 Here later dwelt that patron of our wood,
 The Christian Hermit Leonard, he who slew
 The last authentic dragon England knew;
 A man of prayer and penitential vows,
 Whose tale survives in many a forest house.
 For, having slain his monster, he was given
 To choose whate'er he would in gift from Heaven,
 And took for his sole recompense this thing:
 "Snakes should not bite, nor nightingales should sing
 Within the Forest precincts." Thus, thought he,
 His orisons should unmolested be
 By mundane joys and troubles.

Yonder ridge,
 Cutting the sky-line at the horizon's edge,
 Is the Surrey Hills. Beneath the chalk pit, set
 Like a white cloud upon the face of it,

Lies Dorking, famed for fowls, and, further still,
Wotton and Shere. In front you have Leith Hill,
Which looks upon St. Paul's and on the sea,
A point of note in our geography.
All this is Evelyn's land, who long ago
Left us his record of the vale below
And wrote the "Silva"; now to hands as good
Passed, the descendant's of his name and blood,
That doughty squire's, who lately stood in fight
With the new dragons of the Primrose rite,
And broke a lance for Ireland and the cause
Of freedom, flouted by coercion laws.
Strange change! For long in history these same hills
Were held as ominous of lowland ills,
A source of robber fear, in foul repute,
And natural fortress since the days of Knute,
And earlier still when Saxon Sussex stood
A home-ruled kingdom of primæval wood.
A camp, an eagle's nest, a foot set down
Into the Weald, and evil of renown
With the free dwellers of the plain, who saw
A menace brooding of imperial law.
Saxon or Dane or Norman, each in turn,
Set there his camp to pillage and to burn;
For history, just as now, was mainly then
A tale of wars 'twixt regiments and men.
We, forest dwellers, show with honest boast
Our Slaughter Bridge, where the Norse horde was lost,
Drowned in the red Mole waters, when the Dane
Fled from his eyrie, nor returned again.

The farthest point of all, and looking west,
Is the line of Hindhead, on whose triple crest,
With a good glass, a three-inch telescope,
You might make out the cross upon the top:

It used to be a gibbet. As a child
 What tales I treasured of that headland wild,
 With its three murderers, who in chains there hung,
 Rocked by the winds and tempest-tossed and swung !
 Three Portsmouth sailors were they who their mate
 Murdered for gold and grog, which guineas get,
 And in the " Punch Bowl " made their brute carouse,
 Leaving him dead, in a lone public-house,
 Where retribution seized them as was due,—
 For in that age of simple faiths and true
 Murder did always out,—and so apace
 Brought them to justice in that self-same place ;
 And many years they hung. At last its sway
 Humanity, that child of yesterday,
 Asserted in their case, and craved their bones
 For Christian sepulture and these trim stones.
 I half regret the leniency thus lent :
 Their gallows-tree was their best monument ;
 But ours is a trim age.

There, farther down,
 Is a tower, or " folly," built of late by one
 We call in these parts " Chevalier de Malt,"
 (The brewers love high places, and no fault).
 Behind us the chief ridge. And, as I speak,
 Out of its bowels, with an angry shriek,
 And rushing down the valley at our feet,
 The train has found us out in our retreat.
 It came from Balcombe tunnel and is bound
 To be in London ere an hour is round.
 It scarcely scares our solitude away ;
 And yonder Royston crows, the black and grey,
 Sit on unmoved upon their oak. This ridge
 Is only thirty miles from London Bridge,

And, when the wind blows north, the London smoke
Comes down upon us, and the grey crows croak,
For the great city seems to reach about
With its dark arms, and grip them by the throat.
Time yet may prove them right. The wilderness
May be disforested, and Nature's face
Stamped out of beauty by the heel of Man,
Who has no room for beauty in his plan.

Such things may be, for things as strange have been.
This very place, where peace and sylvan gre
And immemorial silence and the mood
Of solemn Nature, virgin and unwooded,
Seem as a heritage,—this very place
Was once the workshop of a busy race
Which dug and toiled and sweated. Here once stood,
Amid the blackened limbs of tortured wood,
And belching smoke and fury from its mouth,
A monstrous furnace, to whose jaws uncouth
A race as monstrous offered night and day
The Forest's fairest offspring for a prey.
Here stood a hamlet, black and populous,
With human sins and sorrows in each house,
A mining centre. Which of us could guess
Each yew-tree yonder marks a dwelling-place
Of living men and women ?—nay, a tomb ?
Of all the secrets hidden in Earth's womb,
None surely is more pitiful and strange
Than this of human death and human change
Amid the eternal greenness of the Spring.
All we may guess of what the years shall bring,
Is this : that about April every year,
White blossoms shall burst forth upon the pear
And pink upon the apple. Nothing else.
Earth has a silent mockery which repels

Our questioning. Her history is not ours,
And overlays it with a growth of flowers.

Ah, Prudence, you who wonder, being town bred,
What troubles grieve us in the lives we lead,
What cause we have for sorrow in these fields
Whose beauty girds us with its thousand shields,—
This is our tragedy. You cannot know,
In your bald cities, where no cowslips blow,
How dear life is to us. The tramp of feet
Brushes all older footsteps from the street,
And you see nothing of the graves you tread.
With us they are still present, the poor dead,
And plead with us each day of life, and cry
“ Did I not love my life, I too, even I ? ”
You wonder !—Wonder rather we are not
All touched with madness and disease of thought,
Being so near the places where they sleep
Who sowed these fields we in their absence reap.
It were more logical. And here in truth
No few of our Weald peasants in their youth
Lose their weak wits, or in their age go mad,
Brooding on sights the world had deemed most glad.
I have seen many such. The Hammer Ponds,
So frequent in the Forest’s outer bounds,
Have all their histories of despairing souls
Brought to their depths to find their true life’s goals.
You see one in the hollow, where the light
Touches its blackness with a gleam of white,
Deep down, and over-browed with sombre trees
Shutting its surface primly from the breeze,
The landscape’s innocent eye, set open wide
To watch the heavens,—yet with homicide
Steeped to the lids.

'Tis scarce a year ago

The latest sufferer from our rural woe
Found there his exit from a life too weak
To shield him from despairs he dared not speak.
A curious lad. I knew young Marden well,
Brought up, a farmer's son, at the plough's tail,
And used for all romance to mind the crows
At plain day-wages in his father's house.
A "natural" he, and weak in intellect,
His fellows said, nor lightly to be pricked
To industry at any useful trade ;
His wits would go wool-gathering in the shade
At harvest time, when all had work on hand,
Nor, when you spoke, would seem to understand.
At times his choice would be for days together
To leave his work and idle in the heather,
Making his bed where shelter could be found
Under the fern-stacks or on open ground,
Or oftenest in the charcoal burners' hives,
When he could win that pity from their wives.
Poor soul ! He needed pity, for his face,
Scarred by a burn, and reft of human grace,
And for his speech, which faltering in his head
Made a weak babble of the words he said.
His eyes too—what a monster's ! Did you ever
Watch a toad's face at evening by a river
And note the concentrated light which lies
In the twin topazes men call his eyes ?
Like these were Marden's. From the square of clay
Which was his face, these windows of his day
Looked out in splendour, but with a fixed stare
Which made men start who missed the meaning
there.
Yet he had thoughts. Not seldom he and I
Made in these woods discourse of forestry,

Walking together, I with dog and gun,
 He as a beater, or, if game was none,
 Marking the timber trees and underwoods.
 He knew each teller in these solitudes,
 And loved them with a quite unreasoned art,
 Learned from no teacher but his own wild heart.
 Of trees he quaintly talked in measured saws
 Which seemed the decalogue of Nature's laws,
 Its burden being as erst, "Thou shalt not kill"
 Things made by God, which shall outlive thee still.
 For larch and fir, newcomers from the North,
 He pleaded scantily when their doom went forth,
 Knowing they needs must die, and the birch stems,
 Since Spring renews them, yet with stratagems
 Framed to delay the moment of their fate.
 For beech he battled with more keen debate
 Of hand and eye, in deprecating tone,
 Holding their rights coeval with our own.
 But when we came to oak, good Sussex oak,
 The flame burst forth, and all his being spoke
 In words that jostled in his throat with tears,
 "An oak which might outlive a thousand years."
 He held this sacrilege. Perhaps some strains
 Of Druid blood were mingled in his veins,
 Which gave authority to guard the tree
 Sacred of yore, and thus he vanquished me.

How came he to his end, poor Marden? Well,
 All stories have their reason, as some tell,
 In Eves that give the fruit for which men grieve,
 Or, what is often worse, refuse to give.
 This last was Marden's unprotected case,
 Whose virtue failed him, and his ugliness,
 To escape the common fate of all mankind.
 He fell in love egregious and purblind,

Just like the wisest. She who caused his flame
Was not, I think, in honesty to blame
If she was less than serious at his suit.
Marden, as lover, was grotesquely mute,
And his strange eyes were not the orbs to move
A maiden's fancy to a dream of love.
In truth they were scarce human. Still 'twas hard
His passion should be met, for sole reward,
With sermon phrases and such gospel talk
As preachers license for a Sunday walk,
Mixed with her laughter. This was all she gave,
An endless course of things beyond the grave,
Till he lost reckoning and, poor witless man,
Began to reason on the cosmic plan,
Which meted this scant mercy in his case,
And placed him in such straits for happiness.
Can you not see it? All our rustics live
In their small round of thoughts as in a hive,
Each cell they build resembling each each day,
Till their wits swarm, and then they are away.
Marden went mad, misled by his queen bee,
Through a deep slough of black theology,
Which ended in destruction and this pool,
With Hell beyond him for his poor dumb soul.
He sought her final pity for love lost.
She talked of Heaven, and sent him tracts by post.
He pleaded. She reproved. She prayed. He swore.
She bade him go. He went, and came no more.
Such was the history, no whit uncommon.
I neither blame the boy nor blame the woman,
Only the hardness of a fate which laid
Its iron flail upon too weak a head.
She watched him go, half doubting what would come,
Her last tract crushed betwixt his angry thumb
And his clenched fingers, and his lips grown white,

And his eyes gleaming with their maniac light,
And so towards the hill.

That afternoon,
The last of a late autumn, saw the sun
Set in unusual splendour (it is said
A disc of gold in a whole heaven of red),
The herald of a frost, the earliest
Known for a lifetime. There, for summer dressed,
The trees stood stiff and frozen in their green,
Belated revellers in some changing scene
Of sudden winter and June left behind.
In all the forest was no breath of wind
For a full fortnight, nor was a leaf shed
Long after Nature in her shroud lay dead,
A beautiful black frost which held the land
In unseen fetters, but with iron hand.
The pools were frozen over in the night,
Without a flaw or ripple; and their light
Reflected every stem of every tree
In perfect mirrors of transparency.
Boys, who a week before were in the field
With bat and ball, now ventured, iron-heeled,
On the ice skating, yet awhile in fear,
Seeing no footing on the water there.
And thus it fell about the corpse was found
(You will have guessed it) in the ice fast bound.
Two boys, the brothers of the girl he wooed,
Tired of their pastime stopped awhile and stood
Over a shallow place where rushes grow,
And peering down saw a man's face below
Watching their own (his eyes were open laid,
Fixed in that terrible stare poor Marden's had);
And thought they saw a vision. Running back,
Loud in their fear, with spectres on their track,

They spread the news through all the frightened farms,
Filling the cottagers with wild alarms,
Till some made bold with spades, and hewed away
The ice above to where the dead man lay.
There, sure enough, was Marden, his fool's mouth
Stuffed for all solace of his sad soul's drouth
With the girl's tracts. Thus primed, he had plunged in
And ended all, with a last deed of sin,
Grotesque and tragic as his life. No less
Let us persuaded be he rests in peace,
Or where were Heaven's justice?

One last tale,

As we walk back,—of worthy Master Gale,
Our house's founder, who in a dark age
Won us the lands we hold in heritage,
Working his forge here in the civil wars,
And welding fortunes out of iron bars.
A story with a moral too, at least,
For money makers, of how wealth increased,
And most of all for us, to whom his toil
Has proved a mine of ease and endless spoil,
Though of a truth we are unlineal heirs,
Not true descendants of his toils and cares.
His history stands recorded in a book
Himself achieved, ere Death his anvil broke,
A volume full of wisdom and God's praise,
Trust in himself, and scorn of human ways.

He was a blacksmith, born at Sevenoke
In Kent, the toilsome son of toilsome folk,
And honourable too, as honour then
Was understood among commercial men.
He paid his way through life. He owed to none
Beyond their will to let the debt run on,

Nor trusted any farther than he need.
 He held the race of man a bastard breed,
 An evil generation, bred of dust,
 And prone to spending, idleness and lust.
 God was his friend. Of Him he counsel took,
 How he should make new ventures with new luck,
 Praying each night continuance of health,
 Increase of wisdom and increase of wealth ;
 Nor ever in his yearly balance sheet
 Forgot to inscribe himself in Heaven's debt.
 A virtuous man, and holding with good cause
 The eternal justice of the social laws
 Which give to industry its well-earned meed,
 And leave the weak and idle to their need.
 From childhood up, he clutched the staff of life,
 As if it were a cudgel for the strife,
 And wielded it throughout relentlessly.
 His parents, brothers, all by God's decree,
 Died of the plague when he was scarce sixteen.
 The date, as I have reckoned, should have been
 The very year the patriots raised their backs
 To the new pressure of the shipping tax.
 His first fight was a battle for the pence
 Left by his father, when, at dire expense
 Of lawyers' fees and charges without end,
 He found himself with fifty pounds to spend,
 And a small stock-in-trade of iron sows,
 A fireless smithy and an empty house.
 With these and God's compassion, and a man
 To strike and blow for him, his trade began,
 Till in four years his industry had grown
 To a fair substance in his native town.

When he was twenty-one, an accident
 Brought him to Sussex ; and, as Saul was sent

To find his father's asses and therewith
Met with a kingdom, so this honest smith,
While chasing a bad debtor through the Weald,
Lit on his fortune in this very field.
For, failing of his money, in its stead
He took his debtor's forge and smelting shed ;
Sold his goodwill at Sevenoke, and set
His smithy in the Forest next to it.
This brought him trade. The civil wars began
And each man's hand was set against each man,
And sword to sword. But, while his neighbours fought,
Gale, like a Gallio, cared for these things nought,
And sold his iron with indifferent zeal
To kings and Parliaments in need of steel ;
Or, if a prejudice his thought divides,
It is for Cromwell and his Ironsides.
But God's be all the glory, His alone
Who to His servant Gale such grace had shown !

Thus, in an iron age, this thrifty man
Got gold and silver, and, while others ran
Out of their fortunes, he with pockets full
Bought up their lands and held the world a fool.
'Tis now two hundred years since Father Gale
Laid down his pick and hammer. He had won,
By forty years of toil beneath the sun,
The right to work no longer, for himself
And for his heirs for ever. This is Wealth !
He was a prudent buyer, and died possessed
Of some four thousand acres of the best
Land in the parish. His first purchases
Were in Worth Forest, to his vulgar eyes
I fear mere wood for burning. Pease-pottage
And Frog's-hole farms came next ; and in his age,

Wishing, as he says, to have a good estate
 And house to live in, though the day was late
 To think of building, and he most abhorred
 To waste his substance upon brick and board,
 Holding with prudent minds that such intent
 Is but at best a "sweet impoverishment"
 And that the wise man doth more soundly hit
 Who turns another's folly to his wit,
 He purchased Caxtons, manor and domain,
 To be the home of a new race of men.

His last words, as recorded by his son,
 A man of taste and letters and who won
 A seat in Parliament in William's reign,
 Were uttered in the ancient Biblic strain
 Dear to the age he lived in and to him.
 They might be David's in their cadence grim.
 "When I am dead and gone," he said, "my son,
 Trust in the Lord and in none other, none.
 Be wary of thy neighbours. They are vile,
 A brood of vipers, to oppose whose guile
 I have been at constant charges all my life.
 Take thee an honest woman for thy wife,
 And get thee sons who shall inherit all
 Thy God hath given thee, spite of Adam's fall.
 Guard well thy rights, and cease not to pull down
 All gates that block thy highway to the town,
 Such as that man of Belial, Jacob Sears
 Has set in Crawley Lane these thirty years.
 Let no man venture to enclose the wastes.
 Be on thy guard against such ribald priests
 As Lee and Troughton. They are an ill brood,
 A bastard generation, bone and blood.
 Hold fast to thy religion. Go not thou
 After lewd women and the worldly show

Of rich apparel. Keep thy substance close
In thy own chamber for the fear of loss,
And thy own counsel closer, lest men find
Their way to rob thee of thy peace of mind.
But, more than all, be quit of vain pretence,
And see thy income equal thy expense,
So shalt thou have thy God with thee alway."

Thus runs the story. You have seen to-day
The latest shoot of his posterity,
The boy we left there sleeping. His shall be
One day the guardianship of this domain,
As other Gales have held it. It were vain
In me to speak of all the goodly fruit
Begotten on the stem of this old root,
This sour crab-apple, worthy master Gale.
This child perhaps. . . . But that will be a tale
For new historians.

Listen ! Did you hear
Just now, down in the valley, someone cheer
Or hail us ? Stop. Ay, there there comes a man,
Running and shouting loud as a man can.
He sees us too, and slowly through the fern
Now climbs to meet us. Something we shall learn
Without a doubt. God grant it be not ill !
And yet he seems to falter and stand still.
What is your message, Penfold ? Why this haste ?
A little closer. Speak man ! Here at last
You have found us. Come. What is it that you said ?
See, we have courage.

" Sir, the child is dead ! "

“ SED NOS QUI VIVIMUS ”

I

How beautiful is life—the physical joy of sense and breathing ;

The glory of the world which has found speech and speaks to us ;

The robe which summer throws in June round the white bones of winter ;

The new birth of each day, itself a life, a world, a sun !

II

I love all things that are young and happy and eternal,
Eternal in their change and growth as I too changing grow.

Old am I, and how many voices that I loved are heard not !
Yet the world lives, and in its life I live and laugh and love.

III

I woke to-day at daybreak, thrilled with a new sense of pleasure near me,

Because a bird sang at my window and had ceased, afraid.

Awhile I lay and listened conscious only of my being,

The same fool school-boy as in days gone by, nerve, sinew, vein.

IV

Who tells us we are changed, that we with our wise years grow older ?

I am a poet, may be patriot, soldier, statesman, priest.

Yet none the less I lay to-day and watched in childish wonder

The flies tie and untie their knots, a mystery unrevealed.

V

The flies' way in the air perplexed me ever and perplexes
No less this hour than in old time. So Solomon the
wise,
Spite of his wit, essayed in vain the riddle of the eagles ;
And I a child to-day lay there, a child, less than a child.

VI

And I heard tones well-known and prudent words and
phrases ventured
Gently to chide me for hours wasted thus in ease,
Till I too spoke and vowed aloud new ways of life amended,
And for the thousandth time in pain arraigned and blamed
my dreams.

VII

Then I rose hastily, as one who hears and fears reproving,
Although, God help me, there is living none now dares to
chide or blame,
And I broke through the curtain of the dusk, and from the
Orient
The sun's face through the window smiled, the lord of a
new day.

VIII

How dare I grieve in the fair presence of the lord of
morning ?
How dare I not rejoice who thus its king in Eden reign ?
God's peace is on this place proclaimed, and named, and
promised,
A sentient joy of living things which fills and thrills the
Earth.

IX

Here all things joyous are. Birds breed in sedge and
 thicket ;
 Hares feed in pairs, and squirrels leap from spray to
 spray ;
 Dead limbs of elms make nests for the woodpeckers ;
 The coots' cry from the mere comes loud and tells of
 rain.

X

Naught here may harm or hurt. This is a sanctuary
 For the world's weak, hedged in with love and fenced
 and sealed—
 Man its sole outcast, the earth's mad disturber branded
 Still with the mark of Cain and death from which life
 flees.

XI

Thus musing in my pride, and shame too somewhat, I
 descended,
 Led by invisible hands towards the trees and fields
 below.
 Along these self-same paths my childhood ran exulting,
 Following the poor lost dead who loved them as I love.

XII

What was their pride then in their leafy fair possession,
 Theirs in their day, who planned these glades and thickets
 round !
 How has their presence vanished from the silent pastures,
 The poor lost dead who held my hand and loved them as
 I love !

XIII

Yet not to mourn I came. No day of joy destroyed
deserves our anguish.

Pleasure's whole soul is this, to feel the living stream
which flows.

That which they did I do. In me they live unvanquished.

My voice is theirs to-day, my step their step, my soul
their soul.

XIV

For them I live ungrieving, and ungrieved their fruit I
gather

From trees they planted bravely in their pride of life and
time.

They fashioned these old gardens. Let my soul their joy
inherit,

Their passion heaped on passion, life on life, for my
life's prize.

XV

Who were they all ? Some names they bore well-known,
some others fameless.

A box of parchments yellow lies in the dull dust of age ;

A few poor letters, written by fond hands to fonder faces ;

Through all the passionate love of home, this home of
mine, once theirs.

XVI

The primæval tiller of the soil enjoyed, the soil ancestral,

Whence came he ? What his lineage ? Nay, 'tis hidden.

Some have told

Tales of high daring done, lands won, through lines remote
descending

From old Norse sources and the potent loins of kings
and gods.

XVII

Or, with less pomp, of armoured knights, when knights
 were held heroic,
 Of prudent counsellors and priests and men revered for
 law,
 Dim-featured ghosts of vanished names set in forgotten
 story,
 Pleading for memory still of their last son through years
 of change.

XVIII

And yet I know not. Truth and fable here are strangely
 blended.
 Nay, rather let me set before my face in fancy one
 Like to myself, a clod of Sussex earth more kindly kneaded,
 And mostly noble through the love of right, the sense of
 wrong.

XIX

I see him stand beneath these pollard oaks, the same, hard-
 handed,
 With hook, and axe, and bill, a wrestler with the forest's
 green,
 A man grave-featured, dull of thought and wit, slow-paced,
 unyielding,
 Stern in his toil and niggard still of smile and sign and
 speech.

XX

The woodland round him a vast sea was then, whose
 scattered islands
 Were these few acres conquered hardly by men whole of
 heart,

Spite of the demons and wild spectral elves that held the
forest
And deadly dragons haunting still in guile the undrained
morass.

XXI

Who knows? A servant he, may be, of our good saint and
patron,
The cloistered friar, who for his life-long penance vowed
and done,
And for some monsters slain, had claimed in sole reward
and guerdon
The wood birds' silence round him while he made his
prayer at noon.

XXII

How have the birds grown jubilant once more in song and
godless,
In these unchastened days when men have ceased to
kneel or pray !
This peasant knelt in faith. The world to him had nothing
joyous.
Death, like a spectre, dogged him close with fears of
Heaven and Hell.

XXIII

And yet he loved these lands. Here haply a strange
breadth of freedom
Was from all lords and kings by reason of the forest fear.
What warrior dared to search these "antres vast and
desarts idle"
For such poor scattered few freeholders as its fastness
held ?

XXIV

The Roman, Dane and Norman from the Down, their
distant eyrie,
Looked forth, but only looked. The swamps of trackless
mire
Clogged all their chariot wheels who dared by force of arms
to venture
With horse and spear and rider through these perilous
bogs accursed.

XXV

And thus he lived and died, unknown to all, untamed,
unlorded,
This silent first forefather of the paternal woods re-
claimed,
Holding his place beneath the sun with sullen desperate
caution
On the square plot of up-turned acres that his spade had
made.

XXVI

Lives there in me his son still something of his hardy
sinew,
Something of his heroic soul? Still darkly arched
o'erhead
The forest speaks to me, its child. I hoard and count and
reckon
As my birth's right and prize these lands, and look
askance at men.

XXVII

Deep in my soul he lies. Nor less the rest, the crew
penurious
Of careful tillers holding gold achieved more dear than
ease,
The covetous of farms still grimly set through generations
To add their store of value won to the ancestral fields.

XXVIII

The wealth they made that day is mine, the glades reclaimed,
the hamlets,
The treasure of the earth deep delved in reigns Plantagenet,
The store of iron ore heaped high for needs of civil battle,
When men in armour trod the flying heels of armed
men.

XXIX

Some gathered fortune boldly daring. Truce then to the
forest.
Some spent their store in lordly wassail, brawling and
lewd wine.
What anger was twixt neighbours there, twixt sire and son
what contest !
What bonds usurious countersigned enriched the hands
of guile !

XXX

Still in their stubbornness of blood they stood, these my
own fathers,
Through whom the thread of life, a feeble cord by fortune
spun
And loosed upon Time's tempest, to their latest born
descended,
And with the life the lands redeemed which thus un-
shorn he loves.

XXXI

Justice, and squire, and clerk, and graduate of humaner
letters !
Here history spreads her written page for certain truth
to record.
On these green lawns rose novel shapes, trim walks and
classic gardens
Decked with Italian forms in stone of nymph and faun
and god.

XXXII

Thus was I born. And lo, their golden leaves renewed
each summer

The oak trees weave for me as them, sublimely, blindly
dumb,

Holding their secrets closely shut, nor even to my cunning
Yielding a word but this, "Alas for thee! and woe for
Man!"

XXXIII

Woe for his valour, woe for thine! Time still shall all
things vanquish,

Folly and virtue, lusts of youth, mad griefs, sublime
designs,

The courage of high manhood feebly striving and then
failing.

Yonder behold the churchyard is, heaped high with thy
own kind.

XXXIV

Here I broke off, in sudden exclamation loud disclaiming

This new insistence of my foolish soul's disease of grief.

The day's work calls me, to my soul I said, a day of labour,

Or only laboured idleness yet clear at least of tears.

XXXV

Therewith I turned the latch before me of the low cow's-
stable,

Where, with her udders full and lowing loud to hear me
near,

Stood my cow Myrtle, large-eyed, moon-faced, brindle-
hided, patient,

Waiting my footstep on the path which every morn she
hears.

XXXVI

What does she meditate on all things, brute, divine and
human,
This mild-eyed mother? She too loves the knee-deep
fields she knows
With the same reasonless desire and natural greed of
longing,
And this between us hidden deep is a strong bond of
love.

XXXVII

Her pulses can beat wildly too with rage and subtle passion
When from her herd she strays. And once each Spring,
with fortune cloyed,
For a brief month she knows all Heaven's love and
rapturous pleasure,
Fondling the thing new born, which is her own, her soul,
her joy.

XXXVIII

I love to touch the links of life between us, the blind kind-
ness
Of joy unreasoned, solace in the sun, in shade delight.
The unhuman part of Man is still the best, his love of
children,
His love of meads and vales at home, his fondness for
his kind.

XXXIX

Let me extenuate naught in thought, nor set down aught
in malice.
Here, Myrtle, is that thing thou lovest best, thy feed of
corn.
Give me in turn thy peace of soul, peace passing under-
standing,
Thy trust each vain sweet day renewed sublime in Man
thy god.

XL

How beautiful is life, the conscious power of thought in
 action,
 The brain's imperious will commanding fate within its
 sphere !
 Around it the world's forces, prisoned Jinns, obey the
 magician,
 Tamed and constrained for his delight their allotted
 tasks to weave.

XLI

And what were life unlabouring, life even here in this dear
 Eden,
 Were there no toil ? Eternal perfectness in idle round
 Is God's sole lot to taste, not ours whom rage of hope
 possesses
 And Time disturbs with tales of change, and dark oblivion
 goads.

XLII

Our actions are our monument. The prince in slaughtered
 thousands
 Carves his red name on fields of war that he may sounder
 sleep.
 The Statesman fashions high his sluggard pride to patriot
 glories
 That he may lie entombed with kings while kings and
 kingdoms grieve.

XLIII

The prophet as of old speaks, “ Rise, ye mourners, from
 your bondage,
 Get ye from hence and flee away afar lest evil come ;

Behold, the Lord shall lead you forth through deserts to
new pastures,
Thus shall ye do, and thus." And he too sleeps his
sleep with God.

XLIV

Nor less the poet. Chosen to sing of an eternal beauty,
Dares he be silent in his day and leave his tale untold ?
How shall he wait on, idly, he a hireling without wages,
Lest in the night untried of toil he wake and cry aloud ?

XLV

There is a record given him he must needs in deeds
accomplish,
A tale of transient things his eyes have seen, his ears
have heard ;
And he a traitor 'were if dying dumb they too should
vanish,
And fill the forgotten lapses lost of the unnumbered
years ;

XLVI

Memories of times departed, each hour filled to the brim
with promise ;
Voices how sweet of human souls whose dreams are with
them laid ;
Echoes of laughters fraught with tears, since joy has turned
to sorrow ;
Footsteps of dancing feet long gone to rest where grasses
wave ;

XLVII

Tender, sad vows of women, how passionately appealing
To eyes they loved, nor deeming day nor night itself too
long

For their blest service, sieging heaven amain in vain for
pity,
And holding earth and fate too strait for their wide arms
of love ;

XLVIII

Manly ambitions, vast as the high arch unspanned of
heaven ;
Schemes of impossible good for Man, made naught by
human fraud ;
Follies of valiant hearts cast forth upon the die of battle ;
Hopes of a world destroyed, made void through human
greed of gold.

XLIX

I too have dreamed a dream which I would fain essay to
interpret,
A dream of infinite love, which, if my hour of wit were
proved,
Should stand my message to the world, a voice of power
for ever,
Binding the generations new to the past ages dumb.

L

How should I speak it best, in what high tones of full-
voiced reason
Holding the souls of all ? No idle lapse of empty sounds
Should cloy the hearing of the earth grown deaf to alien
passion,
No clamour of vain sobs, no throbs, no formless dirge of
words.

LI

But the true sculpture of a thought, clean cut and plain of
 meaning,
 Marble made life, with sinewy phrase and knotted
 argument,
And that deep-throated resonant voice which in the morn
 of Egypt
 Spoke through her Memnon's lips to all, and all a nation
 heard.

LII

This should be prophecy—nay, judgment. But with less,
 if granted,
 Well were I winged for song, and luminous so in thought
 should move
With the world's teachers, bards whose chosen strings have
 nobly chaunted
Hymns of heroic Heaven or only this of human love.

LIII

Only that tragedy of hope, which in its full expansion
 Has never yet been told, the history of a human soul
From its first outlook with blank eyes upon a world of
 shadows
To its last blank farewell in tears upon a world of scorn ;

LIV

The very truth of childhood, with its fears and tribulations,
 Hushed into sudden smiles and sleep by what unreasoning
 change ;
The wherefore and the why of its first bursts of causeless
 laughter ;
The meaning of its griefs untold, the sense of its first
 pain ;

LV

And boyhood's early trust, thrust forth to the chill winds
of schooling,
Learning the bitterness of life through divers ways of
loss,
Wasting the freshness of its joys on noise, its first com-
passion
On its own wounded back, till, turning, it too grasps
the rod ;

LVI

And youth's high hope, with painted dreams of all potential
pleasure,
Doubting which way to spring, the paths of honour
leading here,
There of delight, each robed with morning's virginal new
vesture
And beautiful with tears of love, though who should call
them tears ?

LVII

And manhood with its wars ; and middle life as yet un-
vanquished,
When strength is tried and, having learned through grief
the nobler roads
Of the world's glory, he beholds life's settled purpose,
standing
Calm with his fate, and seems to touch at last the ulterior
goal ;

LVIII

And then the pang which strikes, and the swift end. All
these, in sequence,
Would I set forth in words, tragic, severe, and each
should breathe

Of a new beauty, shade and light, blue skies, white clouds
and tempests,
Mountain and vale and plain and stream, and, circling
all, Death's sea.

LIX

How beautiful is life ! The present sense of souls that
love us ;
The enfolding spirit of love, made known in divers silent
ways ;
The wife, the child, the man and maid, whose zeal and faith
enthroned us
High in their temple niche enshrined ! Thus angels
serving stand.

LX

What need we of more love, of larger fields revealed of
conquest,
Who all things have that heaven itself in its reward
might deal ?
What need we of new life, who touch the goal supreme of
fortune,
Holding to-day for prize the perfect love that casts out
fear ?

LXI

Come with me, child, who art myself, only a self grown
dearer,
One that I dare to love and without shame, for thou art
mine.
What shall our pleasure be to-day, our daily task being
ended ?
Take thou a counsel of thy joy. Be thou my pleasure's
guide.

LXII

Speak. Shall we make our visitation of the woods and forests ?

The midsummer shoot is there ; and in their nuptial robes of green

The oak trees murmur to the flies their tale of full-blown summer,

And, where the stems were felled in Spring, the foxgloves point their spears.

LXIII

Or to the paddocks, deep in green for grazing steer and heifer,
And, what we better love, those creatures of a nobler mould,

Which are fair Nature's masterpiece and last supreme perfection,

Mares with their unweaned foals high-souled in proud descent of blood.

LXIV

Or rather—let the indulgence to our idle souls be granted—
Lapped in the summer heat, without more toil than this of dreams,

On the lake's bosom moored, where birch and alder cast their shadows,

Sit we and woo, hours through, with rod and line the mistrustful bream.

LXV

Here the boat lies, half hidden she, where three weeks since we left her,

In her snug dog-wood nook. The rushes round have bound her in

Already in their net. But we will free and float and set her,
An ark for our new fortunes launched, to bear us where we will.

LXVI

See, there she swims. Our noise in loosing her has roused
a heron,
And with him teals and lapwings, with a cry of swift
alarm.
Ah Man! thy hated face disturbs once more thy natural
fellows.
What is thy kingship worth to thee if all things fly thy
hand?

LXVII

The evil done is done, alas! Let us indulge our laughter,
Dear Hester, sing to me that song the foolish fishes
heard
When you deceived them to their hurt by your unreal
assurance,
Telling of captive birds set free—the while the nets we
spread.

LXVIII

Sing me a song, while I the happy oars in listless measure
Ply looking at your face, and presently, when it is done,
You shall hear stories told of far-off lands and strange
adventures,
Things that your father saw ere you to give him joy
were born;

LXIX

Tales of great mountains where he set his steps in early
manhood,
Not hills like ours, but craggy pinnacles that pierce the
clouds,
Abysmal valleys and white slopes of treacherous ice, whose
foothold
Failed as in dreams men fail and urged him headlong
down,

LXX

Falling for ever—ever—and yet saved by intervention,
 On the extreme curve's edge, of a miraculous softer
 snow,
 Wherein he bedded lay with beating heart till the slow
 rescue
 Gravely descending came and bore him scathless home ;

LXXI

Or of the unlimited fields revealed of grey Arabian desert,
 Where are no streams or shade, but only the blind haze
 of noon,
 And the sun strikes with might, and the skins shrink which
 hold his blessing,
 The dole of water spared, his forfeit life if these be gone ;

LXXII

Drear and untenanted. Yet see the sudden transformation
 When the Spring rains have come ! In every vale and
 hollow there
 Cattle unnumbered pasture knee-deep down in purple
 blossoms,
 And the calf-camels prance, and their dams roar like
 souls in pain.

LXXIII

Or of days spent alone and nights in far Brazilian forests,
 Where sky and earth itself are lost in insolent depths of
 green.
 High overhead the laden tree-tops touch the extremest
 heaven,
 Leading through latticed walls of flowers and veils deep-
 dripped with dew.

LXXIV

The impenetrable shadows dark of that shut place of silence
How are they broken by the sheen and glint of insect
wings,
Bright coloured lamps slow flitting ! Lo from the impervious
thicket
A blaze of blue, a butterfly, bursts flashing through the
trees.

LXXV

Or last, of the vast hum of a tumultuous Indian city,
Where street and bridge are thronged with men who sell
and buy and cry,
And women with bright eyes half veiled pass bearing
flowers and incense,
Through the tall temple gates set wide, to gods in ochre-
ous shrines.

LXXVI

Strange wonderful and vast, till you forget the immediate
beauty,
The home we love, our little raptures over joys well
known,
This lake, these woods, this boat, the brook which tells of
English summer
With its mad bubbles dancing and its hazel foam wind-
borne,

LXXVII

And all that was and is to fill our souls with their con-
tentment
From dawn to dusk. And so in joy this latest evening
ends.
God grant us length of days, of days like these to be
remembered
Till life's last night has come and we too gathered are
in death !

COSAS DE ESPAÑA

SANCHO SANCHEZ

I

SANCHO SANCHEZ lay a-dying in the house of Mariquita,
For his life ebbd with the ebbing of the red wound in
his side.
And he lay there as they left him when he came from the
Corrida
In his gold embroidered jacket and his red cloak and his
pride.

II

But at cockcrow in the morning, when the convents of
Sevilla
Suddenly rang loud to matins, Sanchez wakened with a
cry,
And he called to Mariquita, bade her summon his cuadrilla,
That they all might stand around him in the hour when
he should die.

III

For he thought in his bold bosom, "I have ventured with
them often,
And have led the way to honour upon every ring in
Spain.
And now in this the hardest of the fields that I have
fought in
I would choose that every face of them were witness of
my pain.

IV

“ For their stern eyes would upbraid me if I went down to
the battle

Without a friend to cheer me, or at least a fool to hiss.
And they hold it all unworthy men should die like fatted
cattle

Stricken singly in the darkness at the shambles of Cadiz.”

V

Then he bade the lamps be lighted, and he made them bring
a mirror,

Lest his cheeks should have grown paler in the watches
of the night.

For he feared lest his disciples should mistrust his soul of
terror,

When they came to look upon him, if they saw his face
was white.

VI

Oh, long time in the mirror did he look with awful smiling
At the eyes which gazed out at him, while the women
watched him mute.

And he marked how death's white fingers had been clammy
defiling

The redness of God's image and had wiped the sunburns
out.

VII

Then he spake, “ Go fetch the carmine from the side
drawer of the table,

Where Mariquita keeps it.” But, when it was not
found,

“ 'Tis no matter,” answered Sanchez, “ we must do what
we are able.”

And he painted his cheeks' paleness with the red blood
of his wound.

VIII

And anon there came a murmur as of voices and a humming
 On the staircase, and he knew them by their footsteps
 at the door.
 And he leant up on his pillow that his eyes might see them
 coming
 In their order of the plaza as they strode across the
 floor.

IX

And when they stood around him, in their stately mantas
 folded,
 With a solemn grief outlawing the brute laughter of their
 eyes,
 You had deemed them in the lamplight to be bronzen
 statues moulded
 Of the powers of Nature yielding a brave man in sacrifice.

X

But the soul of Sanchez quailed not, and he laughed in their
 sad faces,
 Crying loud to Mariquita for the Valdepeñas wine.
 "A fair pig-skin, Caballeros, blushes here for your embraces.
 And I drink to you your fortune, and I pray you drink
 to mine."

XI

Then they filled their leathern flagons, and they held them
 up together
 In a ghastly expectation till their chief should give the
 sign.
 And the red wine in the silence flowed like blood adown
 the leather.
 And the red blood from the pillow trickled drop by drop
 like wine.

XII

Spake the Master, " Ere I pledge you, look upon me, men,
and hearken,

For I have a thing to utter, and a dying man is wise.
Death is weighing down my eyelids. Silently your faces
darken.

But another torch is lighted than the daylight in my
eyes.

XIII

" Life, I see it now as never I had thought to comprehend it,
Like the lines which old Manola used to write upon the
sand,

And we looked on in wonder nor guessed till it was ended
The birds and trees and faces which were growing from
her hand.

XIV

" Meaning was there from the outset, glorious meaning in
our calling,

In the voice of emulation and our boyhood's pride of
soul,

From the day when first, the capa from our father's
shoulders falling,

We were seized with inspiration and rushed out upon the
bull.

XV

" Meaning was there in our courage and the calm of our
demeanour,

For there stood a foe before us which had need of all our
skill.

And our lives were as the programme, and the world was
our arena,

And the wicked beast was death, and the horns of death
were hell.

XVI

“ And the boast of our profession was a bulwark against
 danger
 With its fearless expectation of what good or ill may
 come,
 For the very prince of darkness shall burst forth on us no
 stranger
 When the doors of death fly open to the rolling of the
 drum.

XVII

“ As I lay here in the darkness, I beheld a sign from
 Heaven :
 Standing close a golden angel by the footpost of my bed,
 And in his hand a letter with the seal and arms engraven
 Of the glorious San Fernando which he bade me read and
 read.

XVIII

“ And the message of his master, the blessed king my
 patron,
 Was to bid me in his honour to hold myself at need
 For this very day and morning of his feast and celebration,
 And in pledge of his high favour he had sent me his own
 steed.

XIX

“ For the lists of Heaven were open, and that day they had
 decreed it
 There should be a special function for the glory of his
 name.
 And the beasts were Sevillanos, and a master's hand was
 needed
 Lest the swords of Heaven should falter and the Saint
 be put to shame.

XX

“ And I heard the potro stamping in the street, and would
have risen

But that Mariquita held me and the women and my
wound.

And, though the angel left me, it was truth and not a vision,
And I know the Saint has called me, and the place where
I am bound.

XXI

“ I shall fight this day in Heaven, and, though all Hell
shall assail me,

I have hope of a good issue, for perhaps I have some
skill,

And perhaps, if I should stumble or if my hand should
fail me,

There are others in the plaza who have vowed me less
than ill.

XXII

“ And my mantle of salvation is the faith which is our
charter,

And the Virgin of the Pillar my protector and reward,
And the hosts of Heaven my witness and each Spanish
Saint and Martyr,

And our lord Don Santiago himself has lent the sword.”

XXIII

Thus he spoke, and on his speaking fell a silence and a
wonder,

While the eyes of his companions turned in awe from
each to each,

And they waited in expectance for the gates to roll asunder
And the voices of the angels to command him to the
breach,—

XXIV

Waited till the sun uprising sent his glory through the
chamber,
And the spent lamps paled and flickered on the shame
of their dismay,
And the dying man transfigured passed in silence from his
slumber,
Like a king to coronation, in the light of his new day.

XXV

Only they that stood the closest saw the pale lips curved
and parted,
And the eyes flashed out in battle, and the fingers sought
the sword.
“ ’Tis the President has called him,” said Fernandez the
true hearted,
“ He has thrown his hat behind him for the glory of the
Lord ! ”

ACROSS THE PAMPAS

I

Dost thou remember, oh, dost thou remember,
Here as we sit at home and take our rest,
How we went out one morning on a venture
In the West ?

II

Hast thou forgotten, in these English hedgerows,
How the great Pampas rolled out like the sea ?
Never a daisy in that mighty meadow !
Never a tree !

III

Full were our hearts upon that sunny morning ;
Stout-handed and stout-hearted went we forth.
The warm wind in our faces breathed us fortune
From the North ;

IV

And high in heaven the sun stood for a token.
We had no other sign by which to steer.
No landmark is there in the Earth's great ocean,
For mariner.

V

Dost thou remember how, when night was falling,
There in the middle plain, as best we might,
We set our little tent up as a fortress
For the night ?

VI

Dost thou remember how, through the night watches,
We listened to the voices of the plain,
The owls and plovers and the bold bishachas,
Talking like men ?

VII

Drowsy we sat, and watched our horses feeding,
Dim through the night, while over the tent's mouth
The Cross was turning like a clock and reeling
In the South.

VIII

But, as the night grew out and we grew chilly,
Under our blankets safe we crept and warm,
Full of good heart and each with loaded pistols
Close to his arm ;

IX

And so dreamed pleasant dreams of far off faces,
And trees and fields which we had loved in youth,
All in a maze of present apprehension
Mingled uncouth ;

X

And how we travelled on and ever onwards,
Still in the red path of the setting sun,
Until into the heart of a great woodland
We had come ;

XI

And there saw, round about our strange encampment,
Flocks of bright birds which flew and screamed at us,
Red cardinals and woodpeckers and parrots
Multitudinous ;

XII

And on the lake black-headed swans were sailing,
And in the morning to the water's brink
Flamingoes, like the rising sun, came wading
Down to drink.

XIII

Dost thou remember, oh, dost thou remember
How, in that fatal wood, the mancaròn
Found out a poisonous herb before his fellows,
And fed thereon ;

XIV

And how we left him, and how Cæsar sickened,
And how the sky grew dark and overcast,
And how two tragic days we rode on silent
In the blast ;

XV

And how the wind grew icy and more icy,
Until we could not feel our hands or feet,
As sick at heart we sought in vain a hiding
From the sleet ;

XVI

Lighting at last on a deserted post-house,
Where we found shelter from the wind, but nought
Of entertainment for our souls or comfort
Of any sort ;

XVII

And how in that wild pass brave Cæsar dying
Stretched out his arm towards the promised land,
And saw as in a dream the white hills lying
Close at hand,—

XVIII

For, ere the sun set, suddenly that evening,
The great plain opened out beneath our feet,
And, in a valley far below, lay gleaming,
With square and street,

XIX

And spire and dome and pinnacle, uprising
White on the bosom of a mountain slope,
To our amazement bodily the city
Of our hope.

XX

Dost thou remember, oh, dost thou remember
How the bells rang as, sick and travel-worn,
A weary crew, we made our solemn entry
To the town ?

XXI

Strangely, as phantoms out of the great desert,
We came into the city, and at last
Heard sound of Christian singing in the churches
As we passed :

XXII

And laid at length our weary limbs in rapture
Between the clean sheets of a Christian bed.
Oh ! there are things I think we shall remember
When we are dead !

BODY AND SOUL
A METAPHYSICAL ARGUMENT

BODY AND SOUL

A METAPHYSICAL ARGUMENT

(Man openeth the case)

BODY, from the arrogance
Of the Soul thou seekest shield,
Makest prayer the old mis-chance
Of your birth-bond be repealed,
Since, sayest thou, the Soul would wield
Sovereign power and looks askance
At her partner in life's dance.

Tell me, Soul, why claimest thou,
Of what right, this sovereignty ?
Wherefore dost thou cloud thy brow,
This thy partner standing nigh ?
Scorn is written in thine eye
Watching him. Speak plain and show
All thy plaint that I may know.

(The Soul speaketh)

Judge most just ! Wouldst ask of me
My being's secret ? Ask the fire
Why he is kindled in the tree,
And why his flames mount high and higher
In scorn of the poor tortured pyre
Which feedeth him. Ask why the Sea
Thus frets her bed eternally.

The flames their kindred flames would reach;
The waves leap up towards the Moon,
And when they foam upon the beach
Grow pale like her. From morn to noon
The sun-flower turneth with the Sun.
A power there is in all and each
Should lesson thee what I would teach.

For I am subtle as the air
Which stirs the tree-tops, scattering wide
The feathered seed-blooms everywhere
And ordering all, itself unspied,
And is unchanged while all beside
Change and decay. In me no share
Is of the death these others bear.

Simple in essence I, to thee
Known but as one exiled by Fate
From her old home Eternity,
And sunk awhile from her estate
And bound to a material mate,
Through whose gross shape and quality
Alone my worth revealed may be.

Yet, shall I doubt me of the power,
Inborn in me, to seek a throne,
Although I stumble toward the hour
Which waits with death, my penance done,
Body to naught and I to run
Simple and unconditioned nor
On quality dependent more ?

Or is faith nothing ? O I feel
Pity for this poor thing of dust ;
And that is why I bid him kneel

And be ennobled, for he must
 Kneel first before his queen in trust.
 Then would I strike him with my steel
 And bind my spurs upon his heel.

But his mistrust defieth me,
 His striving still against the bond
 Which joineth us, nor will he see
 Our wisdom must be straight uncrowned,
 And he but perish of the wound,
 In such divorcement were he free.
 This is my secret, this my plea.

(The Judge questioneth)

Body, hast thou heard aright
 How Soul thus doth thee deny?
 She hath claimed in thy despite
 Being from Eternity.
 Hast thou ancestry as high?
 Tell thy title, thou sad wight,
 Else her claim will I requite.

(Body replieth)

Wouldst thou know my lineage?
 Look around thee. Thou shalt trace
 From form to form, from age to age,
 Fossil records of my race.
 I, the latest, claim my place
 Engrossed on Earth's ancestral page
 By right inscribed of heritage.

Tell me, in those days long gone
 Where was Soul? What then her power?
 If to-day she claims a throne,

Was she fashioned me before ?
Both of us old Matter bore.
I the elder was, Time's son,
Ages vast ere Soul was known.

Soul came later. My male might
Shielded her in her first cell,
She a frail fair anchorite,
Guarded by my valiance well,
Silent, sanct, intangible.
All my joy she was, and light;
A new dawning on my night.

Thus the out-set. Tryst we kept
In good concord I and she.
Mine the strength which overstepped
Her weak life's propinquity.
Or we yielded mutually ;
I was weary and she slept,
She was wounded and I wept.

Happy days of growth. Ah why
Must change come with pride of youth ?
She was eager, slow-foot I,
Glorious she, I all uncouth.
Her new wit showed little ruth,
Threw out cunning wings to fly,
Made as she would pass me by.

And when she found she could not win
Alone upon the blast of Time,
It irked her we were counted kin,
Until she held it me a crime
I should be matched with one sublime
And noble as she fain had been,
And last she claimed to be my queen.

Therefore from her arrogance
And her pride I make appeal
Praying this the ordinance
Of our birth-bond, grown unéal,
Thou wouldst cancel or make real.
Be our judge in this mis-chance ;
Else decree deliverance.

(Judgement is given)

I am but by your union.
With either Soul or Body lost,
All perisheth. Then work ye on
Together friends, not corpse and ghost.
To live and be is a brave boast.
Learn this ; alone ye nothing can,
Yet both together ye make Man.

THE GOLDEN ODES OF PRE-
ISLAMIC ARABIA

IMR EL KÁIS

WEEP, ah weep love's losing, love's with its dwelling-place
set where the hills divide Dakhúli and Háumali.

Túdiha and Mikrat ! There the hearths-stones of her
stand where the South and North winds cross-weave the
sand-furrows.

See the white-doe droppings strewn by the wind on them,
black on her floors forsaken, fine-grain of peppercorns.

Here it was I watched her, lading her load-camels,
stood by these thorn-trees weeping tears as of colocynth.

Here my twin-friends waited, called to me camel-borne :

Man ! not of grief thou diest. Take thy pain patiently.

Not though tears assuage thee, deem it beseemeth thee
thus for mute stones to wail thee, all thy foes witnesses.

What though fortune flout thee ! Thus Om Howéyrith did,
thus did thy Om Rebábi, fooled thee in Másali.

O, where these two tented, sweet was the breath of them,
sweet as of musk their fragrance, sweet as garánfoli.

Mourned I for them long days, wept for the love of them,
tears on my bosom raining, tears on my sword-handle.

Yet, was I unvanquished. Had I not happiness,

I, at their hands in Dáret, Dáret of Júljuli ?

O that day of all days ! Slew I my milch-camel,

feasted the maidens gaily : well did they load for me !

Piled they high the meat-strings. All day they pelted me,
pelted themselves with fatness, fringes of camel-meat.

Climbed I to her howdah, sat with Onéyzata,
while at my raid she chided : Man ! Must I walk afoot ?
Swayed the howdah wildly, she and I close in it :
There ! my beast's back is galled now. Slave of Grief,
down with thee.

Answered I : Nay, sweet heart, loosen the rein of him.
Think not to stay my kisses. Here will I harvest them.
Grieve not for thy camel. Grudge not my croup-riding.
Give me—and thee—to taste things sweeter than clove-
apples,

Kisses on thy white teeth, teeth, nay the pure petals,
even and clean and close-set, wreathing a camomile.
Wooded have I thy equals, maidens and wedded ones.
Her, the nursling's mother, did I not win to her ?
What though he wailed loudly, babe of the amulets,
turned she not half towards him, half of her clasped to me ?
Woe is me, the hard heart ! How did she mock at me,
high on the sand-hill sitting, vowing to leave and go !
Fátma, nay, my own love, though thou wouldst break with
me,
still be thou kind awhile now, leave me not utterly.

Clean art thou mistaken. Love is my malady.
Ask me the thing thou choosest. Straight will I execute.
If so be thou findest ought in thy lover wrong,
cast from thy back my garments, moult thee my finery.
Woe is me, the hard heart ! When did tears trouble thee,
save for my soul's worse wounding, stricken and near to
die ?

Fair too was that other, she the veil-hidden one,
howdahed how close, how guarded ! Yet did she welcome
me.

Passed I twixt her tent-ropes : what though her near-of-kin
lay in the dark to slay me, blood-shedders all of them.

Came I at the mid-night, hour when the Pleiades
showed as the links of seed-pearls binding the sky's
girdle.

Stealing in, I stood there. She had cast off from her
every robe but one robe, all but her night-garment.

Tenderly she scolded : What is this stratagem ?

Speak, on thine oath, thou mad one. Stark is thy
lunacy.

Passed we out together, while she drew after us

on our twin track to hide it, wise, her embroideries,

Fled beyond the camp-lines. There in security

dark in the sand we lay down far from the prying eyes.

By her plaits I wooed her, drew her face near to me,

won to her waist how frail-lined, hers of the ankle-rings.

Fair-faced she—no redness—noble of countenance,

smooth as of glass her bosom, bare with its necklaces.

Thus are pearls yet virgin, seen through the dark water,

clear in the sea-depths gleaming, pure, inaccessible.

Coyly she withdraws her, shows us a cheek, a lip,

she a gazelle of Wújra : yearling the fawn with her.

Roe-like her throat slender, white as an áriel's,

sleek to thy lips up-lifted : pearls are its ornament.

On her shoulders fallen thick lie the locks of her,

dark as the dark date-clusters hung from the palm-
branches.

See the side-plaits pendent, high on the brows of her,

tressed in a knot, the caught ones fast with the fallen
ones.

Slim her waist : a well-cord scarce has its slenderness.

Smooth are her legs as reed-stems stripped at a water-
head.

The morn through she sleepeth, musk-strewn in indolence,
hardly at noon hath risen, girded her day dresses.

Soft her touch : her fingers fluted as water-worms,

sleek as the snakes of Thóbya, tooth-sticks of 'Ishali.

Lighteneth she night's darkness, ay, as an evening lamp
 hung for a sign of guidance lone on a hermitage.
 Who but shall desire her, seeing her standing thus,
 half in her childhood's short frock, half in her woman's
 robe !
 Strip thee of youth's fooling, thou in thy manhood's
 prime.
 Yet to her love be faithful : hold it a robe to thee.
 Many tongues have spoken, warned me of craft in love.
 Yet have they failed an answer : all were thine enemies.

Dim the drear night broodeth : veil upon veil let down,
 dark as a mad sea raging, tempting the heart of me.
 Spake I to Night stoutly, while he, a slow camel,
 dragged with his hind-feet halting : gone the forehand of
 him.
 Night ! I cried, thou snail Night, when wilt thou turn to
 day ?
 When ? Though in sooth day's dawning worse were than
 thou to me.
 Sluggard Night, what stays thee ? Chained hang the stars
 of thee,
 fast to the rocks with hempen ropes set un-movable.

Water-skins of some folk—ay, with the thong of them
 laid on my nága's wither—borne have I joyfully,
 Crossed how lone the rain-ways, bare as an ass-belly :
 near me the wolf, starved gamester, howled to his
 progeny.
 Cried I : Wolf, thou wailest. Surely these lives of ours,
 thine and my own, go empty, robbed of prosperity.
 All we won we leave here. Whoso shall follow us,
 seed in our corn-track casting, reap shall he barrenness.

Rode I forth at day-dawn : birds in their nests asleep :
stout on my steed, the sleek-coat, him the game-
vanquisher.

Lo, he chargeth, turneth,—gone is he—all in one,
like to a rock stream-trundled, hurled from its eminence.

Red-bay he : his loin-cloth chafing the ribs of him
shifts as a rain-stream smoothing stones in a river-bed.

Hard is he : he snorteth loud in the pride of him,
fierce as a full pot boiling, bubbling beneath the lid.

Straineth he how stoutly, while, as spent fishes swim,
tied to his track the fleet ones plough his steps wearily.

See, in scorn he casteth youth from the back of him,
leaveth the horseman cloakless, naked the hard-rider.

As a sling-stone hand-whirled, so is the might of him,
loosed from the string that held it, hurled from the spliced
ribbon.

Lean his flanks, gazelle-like, legs as the ostrich's ;
he like a strong wolf trotteth ; lithe as a fox-cub he.

Stout his frame ; behind him, look, you shall note of him
full-filled the hind-leg gap, tail with no twist in it.

Polished, hard his quarters, smooth as the pounding-stone
used for a bridegroom's spices, grind-slab of colocynth.

As the henna juice lies dyed on a beard grown hoar,
so on his neck the blood-stains mark the game down-
ridden.

Rushed we on the roe-herd. Sudden, as maids at play
circling in skirts low-trailing, forth leaped the does of it.

Flashing fled they, jewels, shells set alternately
on a young gallant's neck-string, his the high pedigreed.

Yet he gained their leaders, far while behind him lay
bunched in a knot the hindmost, ere they fled scatterwise.

'Twixt the cow and bull herds held he in wrath his road ;
made he of both his booty : sweatless the neck of him.

All that day we roasted, seethed the sweet meat of them,
row upon row in cauldrons, firelighters all of us.
Nathless home at night-fall, he in the fore-front still.

Where is the eye shall bind him ? How shall it follow
him ?

The night through he watcheth, scorneth him down to lay,
close, while I sleep, still saddled, bridled by side of me.

Friend, thou seest the lightning. Mark where it wavereth,
gleameth like fingers twisted, clasped in the cloud-rivers.
Like a lamp new-lighted, so is the flash of it,
trimmed by a hermit nightly pouring oil-sésame.

Stood I long a watcher, twin-friends how dear with me,
till in Othéyb it faded, ended in Dáriji.

By its path we judged it : rain over Káttan is ;
far in Sitár it falleth, streameth in Yáthboli.

Gathereth gross the flood-head dammed in Kutéyfati.

Woe to the trees, the branched ones ! Woe the kanáhboli!
El Kanáan hath known it, quailed from the lash of it.

Down from their lairs it driveth hot-foot the ibexes.
Known it too hath Téyma ; standeth no palm of her
there, nor no house low-founded,—none but her rock-
buildings.

Stricken stood Thabíra whelmed by the rush of it,
like an old chief robe-folded, bowed in his striped mantle.
Nay, but he Mujéymir, tall-peaked at dawn of day,
showed like a spinster's distaff tossed on the flood-water.
Cloud-wrecked lay the valley piled with the load of it,
high as in sacks the Yemámi heapeth his corn-measures.
Seemed it then the song-birds, wine-drunk at sun-rising,
loud through the valley shouted, maddened with spiceries,
While the wild beast corpses, grouped like great bulbs up-
torn,
cumbered the hollow places, drowned in the night-trouble.

TÁRAFA

THE tent lines these of Kháula in stone-stricken Tháhmadi.
See where the fire has touched them, dyed dark as the
hands of her.

'Twas here thy friends consoled thee that day with thee
comforting,
cried ; Not of grief, thou faint-heart ! Men die not thus
easily.

Ay, here the howdahs passed thee at day-dawn, how royally !
stood for the Dédi pastures : a white fleet they seemed
to thee,

Ships tall-rigged from Adáuli—of Yámin the build of them—
wandering wide the night through, to meet at the sun-
rising.

Thus climbed they the long wave-lines, their prows set how
loftily !

ploughing the drifted ridges, sand heaped by the sand-
seers.

Alas for the dark-lipped one, the maid of the topazes,
hardly yet grown a woman, sweet fruit-picking loiterer !

A girl, a fawn still fawnless, which browses the thorn-bushes,
close to the doe-herd feeding, aloof in the long valleys.

I see her mouth-slit smiling, her teeth,—nay, a camomile
white on the white sand blooming and moist with the
night-showers.

Sun-steeped it is, pure argent, white all but the lips of her,
these are too darkly painted to shrink from the sun-
burning.

The face of her how joyous, the day's robe enfolding her,
clean as a thing fresh fashioned, untouched by sad time-
fingers.

Enough ! New joys now claim me. Ay, mount and away
from her !

Here on my swift-foot camel I laugh at love's bitterness.
Ship-strong is she, my nága, my stout-timbered road-goer,
footing the long-lined path-way—a striped cloak—in
front of us.

Steel tempered are her sinews. She runs like an ostrich-hen,
one which has fled defying the ash-plumed proud lord of
her.

Out-paces she the best-born, shank still on shank following,
threading the mazes lightly. Ah, what foot shall follow
her ?

The spring-long on Kufféyn she has wandered, her kind
with her,
pastured in pleasant places, the rain-watered thyme-
valleys,

Has turned to her herd's calling, aloft in wrath brandishing,
scared by the thick-furred red thief, that proud tuft the
tail of her.

Her tail sways this and that way—a falcon, the wings of him
bating her flanks impatient : erect stands the bone of it—
So lasheth she in anger anon her croup-rider's knee,
then her own shrunken udder, a drought-withered water-
skin.

Note well her limbs' perfection, her thighs like the elbow-
worn

jamb of a city gateway, two smooth shafts of porphyry.
Her barrel, a stone well-mouth, like bent bows the curves of it,
caved where the neck-shaft enters, ends in an arched
hollow.

Deep dens are her two arm-pits, a tree-trunk with cavities.
Bows are her rib-bones bended, her spine the hands
holding them.

Her elbows are twin buckets, the pails of a water-man
wide-set, the neck between them the strong man who
carries them.

Bridge-like, and Roman-built! How swore he its
architect

none should leave work or loiter, its key-stone unlaid by
them !

Red chestnut is her chin-tuft, a vast vault the back of her.
Swift-step her hind-feet follow the path of her fore-
footing.

Her legs are a cord twisted. Towards them the arms of
her

slant from the shoulders outward, a tent-roof the slope
of them.

So sways she, the strong-skulled one, and lightly her shoulder
blades

rise from her spine alternate, arhyme with the march of
her.

Like rain-pools in the smooth rock, so, flecking the sides of
her,

white stand the girth-marks, witness once of the sores on
them.

Her neck, how tall, how proud-set ! Behold her ! She
raises it

high as in ships of Díjleh the point of a stern-rudder.

Her head-piece a stout anvil, and, joined to it hardily
sharp as a file the neck-ridge, fixed as a vice to it.

Her jowl a Syrian parchment, clean vellum the lip of her,
smooth as a hide of Yémen, no skin-crease nor fold in it.

Her eyes two mirrors shining, her bent brows the shade of
them,

pitted with deep-set hollows, as rock-holes for rain-water.

Eyes dark-rimmed, pure of dust-stains. You gaze in the
depths of them

as in a wild cow's wide eyes, scared for the calf of her.

Ears fearful of the night-sounds, the whispers, the
murmurings

caught in the darkness passing—night—day: they can
rest never.

Their thorn-tips tell her lineage, a wild bull's of Háumala
raging alone forsaken; her breeding you read in them.
Heart watchful of strange dangers, yet stout in the face of
them.

Firm as a test-stone standing where cleft lie the base
pebbles.

Lip slit, nose pierced for nose-ring, how slender its cartilage!
Nobly she lowers it running and stretched to the front
of her.

I strike at her, my nága: I force her: I hurry her,
while in our path the false-lights lure us to follow them.

The gait of her how rhythmic! She sways like a dancing-
girl,

one with the white skirts trailing, who bends to the lord
of her.

Obedient to your riding, she slackens her outrunning,
watches the hide-thong twisted, the speed that you need
of her.

Her head by your hand close held, your knee-crutch how
near to it!

Then with her fore-arms swimming, an ostrich, she flies
with you.

Thus rode I, and thus spake he, the friend of my tear-
sheddings:

O for the wit to cure thee, but and my own sorrows!
His soul within him trembled; it seemed to his hardi-
hood

death and a sure destruction, though far we from road-
farers.

For which of us is valiant? When men speak of true
valour,

I feel my own the name named. Straight am I roused
by it.

No recreant I, my tent-ridge I hide from no enemy.

Nor in the far hills build it who bring men a swift succour.
The hand that seeks shall find me. I stand at the gatherings.

Ay, where men tap the wine-skin, 'tis there they shall
speak with me.

What day the tribes assemble, behold me conspicuous,
sitting as fits my lineage, nor go I in fear of them.

Beside me my companions, bright stars of nobility.

Dyed is her robe with saffron the girl who pours out to us.

O sweet is her shirt's neck-slit, set wide to the eyes of us.

Soft is the thing it hides there. We bade her: Now,
sing to us.

Ay sing to us: we prayed her. And she, with monotony
striking a low note slowly, chaunted unchangingly.

O strange it was that cadence: it came back the wail of it,
grave as a mother's grieving the one son new-slain from her.

Thus sang she. And I spared not the full cups of revelry,
not till my spoil was wasted, my whole wealth's
inheritance.

Then left me they that loved me. Then shunned me my
tribe-fellows.

Sat I alone forsaken, a mange-stricken male camel.

Nathless the poor showed pity, the sons of Earth's particles,
these and the alien tent-lords, the far chiefs befriended me.

You only did revile me. Yet, say, ye philosophers,
was that same wealth eternal I squandered in feasting
you?

Could all you my fate hinder? Friends, run we ahead of it,
rather our lives enjoying, since Time will not wait for us.

And, truly, but for three things in youth's day of vanity,
fain would I see them round me the friends at my death-
bedding,
As first: to outstrip the sour ones, be first at the wine-
bibbing,
ay, at the blink of day-dawn when mixed the cup foams
for me;
And next, to ride their champion, who none have to succour
them,
fierce on my steed, the led one, a wolf roused and thirst-
stricken;
And third, to lie the day-long, while wild clouds are
wilderer,
close in her tent of goat's hair, the dearest beloved of me.
O noble she, a tree-stem unpruned in her maidenhood,
tall as a branch of Khírwá, where men hang their orna-
ments.
'Tis thus I slake my soul's rage, the life-thirst so wild in me.
If we two died to-morrow, think, which would go thirstier?
For lo, his grave the miser's! Lo, next it the prodigal's!
Both are alike, scant favour to hoarder or squanderer.
'Neath mounds of earth the twain lie, a low stone atop of
them,
heavy and broad and shapeless, with new slabs o'er-
laying it.
Death is no subtle chooser. He takes all, the free-givers,
ay, and the rogues close-fisted, the fast-handed gold-
hiders.
And life's heap lies unguarded. The night-thieves make
spoil of it.
All that these leave the day-thieves straightway come
plundering.
Nay, by thy life—I swear it, though fast fly the heels of him,
Death has a lead-rope round him, loose though it seem
to you.

Ha ! How is this ? My kinsman ? my fool-cousin Máleki ?

Daily, as I draw near him, he turns his mad back on me.
He frowns I know not wherefore. He flouts me, as once
with them

Kurt, in the face of all men, flouted and jibed at me.
His help he has denied me ; and, truly, our brotherhood
tried in the fire of asking lies dead in love's sepulchre.
My word his words discredit. Yet all I for Mábadi
asked was a poor assistance to gather his lost camels,
I who hold fast to kinship. I swear by the luck of thee,
when they shall want hard riding, that day they shall
fawn on me,

What day their tribes need succour, when loudly their
womenfolk
cry from his hand the oppressor's to hands that are
mightier.

Be but their honour tainted, I straight will pour out for them
death as from brimming cisterns, nor ask for an argument.
They rail at and revile me, who know me no ill-doer ;
me, who have borne their burdens, cast would they out
from them.

Yet, had my friend been other, this Málek of larger soul,
long had my pain been ended, a respiting found for me.
Shame on him for his baseness. His black hand would
strangle me,
whether I thanked or sued him, or turned but my back
on him.

O cruel is the sword-stroke : it bites with an Indian edge :
yet is their temper keener, the clowns I call kin to me.
Then leave me to my own ways, my tent set in Dárgyadi,
far from the eyes of all men, and earn thee my gratitude.
Had he, the Lord, so willed it, my name had been Khálidi,
or had he willed it Ámer, or Káis, or Márthadi.

Wealth had been mine and increase, ay, all that men most
covet,

sons as a gift of heaven, a proud-lined posterity.

Yet see me a man subtle, one lithe-souled and lithe-bodied,
quick as a snake for wounding, whose head is a hurt to
them.

The oath my tongue has sworn to is this, to keep close to me
ever my sword-blade loosened ; of Indies the edge of it.
Such blade, if I take vengeance and rise up and smite
with it,

needs not a second down-stroke ; I wield me no wood-
chopper.

My sword is my true brother. It grudges no blood-spilling.

Called on to spare, it answers : My lord alone holdeth me.

Thus was I when men armed them and rushed to the battle-
field :

grasped I my sword-hilt foremost, nor feared what fate
doomed for me.

Herds knelt, their necks stretched earth-long. How scared
them the eyes of me,

me with my sword drawn marching, its sheath cast away
from me.

There passed a strong fair nága, a full-uddered milch-camel,
joy of her lord, the gray-beard, a hot man, though time-
troubled.

He shouted when she fell there, her stout sinews houghed
by me :

Man, art thou blind who seest not thy sword hath done
robbery ?

He spake, and to his friends turned : Behold him, this wine-
bibber !

What is his rage against us, his wild words, his drink-
folly ?

Yet paused : Nay, give him wide room and leave it to profit him :

herd we the scared ones rather, lest more he should slay of them.

Then fell the maids aroasting its fair flesh the foal of her,
nor of the fat denied us, the whole hump our prize of it.
We cast the arrows gaily, the dun shafts, the fire-hardened :
each time the holder held them, straightway I won with them.

When I am dead, speak kindly, thou daughter of Mábadi :
rend for my sake thy garments as one worth the love of thee.

Nor count me with the lewd folk, the night-knaves, the roysterers,

men with nor wit nor wisdom nor will to do weightily,
Men slow to deeds of virtue, men swift but in ill-doing,
men by the brave held lightly, with spread palms and brow-knitting.

For, had I been a weakling, know well, their mad hate of me
long had been my destruction, their blind wrath my butchery.

Only it wards me from them the fear of my hand's valour,
this, and my faith untainted, my fame too of ancestry.

Once on a time I bound me with vows, on the battlefield
ever to guard the weak posts, points where the foe threatened,

Points where the bravest faltered, where pale men stood
panic-struck,

where they the strong-hearts trembled, faint through the fear in them.

Nay, by thy life, I fear not. I hold not time weariness ;
neither hath day distressed me, nor night what it brought to me.

Because I see Death spares none. It smites with an even
hand,
bows not to names exalted, nor knows it men's dignities ;
Because with Death behind me, my flight can avail me not,
neither can I outwit him, he lying in wait for me.
Because if one be proved vain by those who seek aid of him,
helpless to hurt the harmful, better he perished.
The days to come, what are they ? A handful, a borrowing :
vain is the thing thou fearest. To-day is the life of thee.
And death is as a well-spring ; to it men pass and pass :
near them is each to-morrow ; near them was yesterday.
Only shall Age, the slow-foot, arraign thee of ignorance :
only shall One bring tidings, when least thou desirest him,
One who is hard to deal with, of whom thou art ransom
neither for pay nor raiment, nor madest thou tryst with
him.

ZOHÉYR

WOE is me for 'Ommi 'Aufa ! Woe for the tents of her
lost on thy stony plain, Durráj, on thine, Mutethéllemi !
In Rákmátéyn I found our dwelling, faint lines how desolate,
tent-marks traced like the vein-tracings blue on the
wrists of her.

Large-eyed there the wild-kine pastured, white roes how
fearlessly,
leaped, their fawns beside them, startled : I in the midst
of them.

Twenty years abroad I wander. Lo, here I stand to-day,
hardly know the remembered places, seek I how painfully.
Here our hearth-stones stand, ay, blackened still with her
cooking-pots,
here our tent-trench squarely graven, grooved here our
camel-trough.
Love, when my eyes behold thy dwelling, to it I call aloud :
Blessed be thou, O house of pleasure, greeting and joy
to thee !

Friend of my soul ! Dost thou behold them ? Say, are
there maidens there,
camel-borne, high in their howdahs, over the Júrthum
spring ?

Say, are their curtains lined with scarlet, sanguine
embroideries,
veiling them from eyes of all men, rose-tinted coverings ?
Slantwise up El Subáan they mounted : high-set the pass
of it.

With them the new-born morning's beauty, fair-faced
and fortunate.

At the blink of dawn they rose and laded. Now, ere the
sun is up,
point they far to Wády Ras, straight as hand points to
mouth.

Joy! Sweet joy of joys! Fair visions, human in tenderness,
dear to the human eye that truly sees them and
understands!

As the scarlet fringe of féнна seed-pods no lip hath browsed
upon,
so is the dye of their scarlet wool new-fringing the
camping-grounds.

And they came to the watering pool in the red rocks: blue-
black the depths of it.

And they planted the tent-poles, straight and fairly, firm
for a dwelling-place.

They have left Kanáan on the far right hand: dark-crowned
the crest of it.

How many foes in El Kanáan! And friends, too, ah,
how many!

But they came to El Subáan in their might, impetuous,
beautiful,

they in their howdahs of scarlet wool. O friend, dost thou
look on them?

I have sworn by the most illustrious dwelling, shrine of
processioners,

house revered of Koréysh and Júrhum, founded in piety.

I have sworn my praise to the two chieftains, men of what
hardihood,

prompt to do when need shall call them, light deeds and
daughty deeds.

Strove ye well, ye Lords of Mórra, what though the clans
of you

long had drowned in blood their friendship, drowned it
in war-clamours.

Ye with Abs and Dóbián that day ye persuaded them,
spite of feud and their death-dealing perfumes of
mínshami.

For thus ye spake : Let peace be garnered, all the fair
wealth of it,

based on pay and fair exchanges, ours to establish it.

Theirs the peace and yours the glory, high names and
dignities,

you the noble twain prevailing, purging the rage of them.

Lo, in Maád ye stand exalted, ye the high-guided ones.

He who a booty brings of glory, shall he not share
in it ?

Healing of wounds ye dealed in hundreds, hundreds of debt-
camels,

guiltless you for the death-guilty, ending the feud of
them.

Tribe and tribe, you paid the ransom, what though the
hands of you

clean were of blood and the red shedding, ay, the least
cup of it.

Yet ye brought the payment bravely, all your fair heritage,
camels yours by right of plunder, these and your ear-
marked ones.

Ho ! To the oath-bound tribes a greeting : Have ye not
sworn to it ?

Ay, and to Dóbián a message : Will ye not keep the
peace ?

For you may not hide from God your dealings, what though
in secrecy

deep in your heart of hearts you seal it. Nathless He
knoweth it,

Knoweth and taketh note in patience, sure of His reckoning
till the day of the great counting, waiteth or hasteneth.

War ! Ye have learned it all, its teachings, well have ye tasted them.

These no tales are that I tell you. Each is a certainty. A smouldering coal ye flung it lightly, blindly despising it.

Lo, into raging flame it leapeth, wind-lit, destroyeth you. Ye are ground as corn by Hate's ill-grinding, flat on her grinding-skin.

Nay, a too fruitful camel she. Twins hath she borne to you, Sinister sons of fear and anger, milk-fed on bitterness ;

dark as his, Aád's, their nursing. Lo, she is weaned of them. And her hand is large to rain you harvests, evil the wealth of them.

No such plenty Irák hath garnered, hell-grain and hate-money.

Ay, by my life, the kin was noble. Yet did it fare with them ill when they the peace-terms flouted. Démдем's the sin of it,

His, Huséyn's, who held his counsel, hiding the thought in him,

yielding naught and naught revealing, steeled in his stubbornness.

For he thought : My end will I accomplish. No ill shall come to me,

fenced and armed, with might behind me, warriors, horse-riders.

Proud he stood, nor feared the tent-lords, what though Om-Káshami

watched them near, the vulture-mother, eyeing the multitude.

Strode he forth, full-armed, a wild beast, fierce for the blood-letting,

mane and claws unclipped, a lion. Who shall his anger brave ?

Fearless, one who doth his vengeance swift on his wrong-
 doer,
 one who unassailed yet rendeth, he the first injurer.
 And they pastured there their fair milch-camels, drove to
 the waterings,
 drank of the full pools brimming over, gall in the hearts
 of them,
 This side and that by blood divided, rank hate the meat of
 them,
 poison-grass to their herds' hurting, mired in blood-
 bitterness.
 Yet, by thy life, not these the guilty. Clean was the steel
 of them,
 pure of blood, Nahík's. They slew not him nor
 Muthéllemi,
 Shareless sharers of the death-due. No blood of Náufali
 stood to their account, nor Wáhab's, nay, nor
 Mukházzemi's.
 Blameless! Clean! Yet have I seen them drive to the
 ransoming
 camel herds untouched, unblemished, fresh from the rock-
 valleys.
 Succour to the tribe that succoured! Who but shall haste
 to them
 in their night of fear, of blackness! All men shall speed
 to them,
 Since they gave, since them the avenger gained not to ill-
 willing,
 nay, nor suppliant failed of favour. Him they abandoned
 not.

I am weary of life who bear its burdens fourscore and how
 many
 years of glory and grief counted. Well may he weary be.

- I know to-day, the day before it, ay, and the days that
were,
yet of to-morrow I know nothing. Blind are the eyes of
me.
- I have seen Fate strike out in the darkness, strike like a
blind camel :
some it touched died straight, some lingered on to
decrepitude.
- I have learned that he who giveth nothing, deaf to his
friends' begging,
loosed shall be to the world's tooth-strokes : fools' feet
shall tread on him ;
- That he that doeth for his name's sake fair deeds shall
further it,
but he that of men's praise is careless dwindleth in
dignity ;
- That he, the lord of wealth, who spendeth naught of his
heaped money,
him his kinsfolk shall hold lightly : children shall mouth
at him ;
- That he who keepeth faith shall find faith ; who in simplicity
shall pursue the ways accustomed, no tongue shall wag
at him ;
- That he who flieth his fate shall meet it, not, though a sky-
ladder
he should climb, shall his fear fend him : dark death shall
noose him down ;
- That he who gifteth the unworthy, spendthrift through
idleness,
praised shall be to his dispraising, shamed at his fool-
doing ;
- That he, who shall refuse the lance-butts borne by the peace-
bearers,
him the lance-heads shall find fenceless, naked the flesh
of him ;

That he who guardeth not his tent-floor, with the whole
might of him,
cold shall be his hearth-stone broken, ay, though he smote
at none ;
That he who fleeth his kin shall fare far, foes for his guest-
fellows ;
that he who his own face befouleth none else shall honour
him ;
That he, who casteth not the burdens laid on the back of
him,
sheer disgrace shall be his portion, waged as he merited ;
That whatso a man hath by nature, wit-wealth or vanity,
hidden deep, the day shall prove it : all shall be manifest.
For how many sat wise while silent, yet was their foolishness
proved when their too much, too little, slid through their
mouth-slitting !
The tongue is the strong man's half ; the other half is the
heart of him :
all the rest is a brute semblance, rank corporality.
Truly, folly in the old is grievous ; no cure is known for it :
yet may the young their soul's unwisdom win to new
sanity.

We asked once, and you gave a guerdon,—twice and again
you gave :
only the mouth that hath no silence endeth in emptiness.

LEBÍD

GONE are they the lost camps, light fittings, long so-
journings

in Miná, in Gháula, Rijám left how desolate.

Lost are they. Rayyán lies lorn with its white torrent beds,
scored in lines like writings left by the flood-water.

Tent-floors smooth, forsaken, bare of all that dwelt in them,
years how long, the war-months, months too of peace-
pleasures.

Spots made sweet with Spring-rains fresh-spilled from the
Zodiac,

showers from clouds down-shaken, wind-wracks and
thunder-clouds ;

Clouds how wild of night-time, clouds of the dawn darkening,
clouds of the red sunset,—all speak the name of her.

Here, in green thorn-thickets, does bring forth how
fearlessly ;

here the ostrich-troops come, here too the antelopes.

Wild cows, with their wild calf-sucklings, standing over them,
while their weanlings wander wide in the bare valleys.

Clean-swept lie their hearth-stones, white as a new
manuscript

writ with texts fresh-graven, penned by the cataracts,
Scored with lines and circles, limned with rings and
blazonings,

as one paints a maid's cheek point-lined in indigo.

All amazed I stood there. How should I make questionings?

Dumb the rocks around me, silent the precipice,

Voices lost, where these dwelt who at dawn abandoning
tent and thorn-bush fencing fled to the wilderness.

Now thy sad heart acheth, grieveth loud remembering
 girls how closely howdahed, awned with what canopies.
 Every howdah curtained, lined with gauze embroideries,
 figured with festoons hung red from the pole of it.
 Trooped they there the maid-folk, wild white cows of
 Túdiha,
 ay, or does of Wújra, long-necked, their fawns with them,
 Fled as the miráge flees, fills the vale of Bísata,
 fills the tree-clad wádies, íthel and rock-mazes.

What of her, Nowára, thy lost love, who fled from thee,
 every heart-link sundered, close loop and free fetter !
 Hers the Mórra camp-fires lit how far in Fáida,
 in Hejáz what marches ! How shalt thou win to her ?
 Eastward move they marching, to Muhájjer wandering
 camped in Táí, in Férda, ay, in Rukhám of it.
 Southward on to Yémen, to Sowéyk their sojournings,
 to Waháf el Káhri, ay, and Tilkhám of it.
 Man, have done ! forget her, one too far to comfort thee !
 Who would his love garner first let him sunder it.
 Shed the love that fails thee. Strong be thou, and break
 with her.

Keep thy gifts for friendship, freed from thy wilderment.
 Mount thee on thy nága. Travel-trained and hard she is,
 low her back with leanness, lessened the hump of her ;
 Shrunk her sides and wasted, jaded with long journeyings,
 spare as her hide shoe-straps frayed by her road-faring.
 Light she to her halter, to thy hand that guideth her,
 as a red cloud southwards loosed from its rain-burden.
 Nay a fair wild-ass she ; at her side the white-flanked one,
 he the scarred ass-stallion, bitten and struck for her.
 Climbed they two the hill-top, he the bite-scarred ass-
 tyrant
 her new mood resenting, being in foal to him

On the crags high posted watcheth he from Thálabut
all the plain to guard her, ambushes laid for her.
Six months of Jumáda wandered have they waterless,
browsing the moist herbage, he her high sentinel.
Till returned their thirsting, need of the far water clefts,
all their will to win there speeding them waterwards.
What though with heels wounded, still the hot wind driveth
them,
as a furnace burning, fire-scorched the breath of it.
In their trail a dust-cloud, like a smoke it wavereth,
like a fire new-lighted, kindling the flame of it,
Flame fanned by the North-wind, green wood mixed with
dry fuel,
smoke aloft high curling. So is the dust of them.
He, when her pace slackened, pushed her still in front of him.
Nay, she might not falter, tyrant he urged her on,
Till they reached the streamlet, plunged and slaked their
thirst in it,
A spring welling over, crest-high the reeds of it ;
All its banks a cane-brake, thick with stems o'ershadowing ;
bent are some, some standing, night-deep the shade of
them.

Say is this her likeness ? Or a wild cow wolf-raided
of her sweet calf loitering, she in the van of them.
She, the short-nosed, missed it. Lows she now unendingly,
roams the rocks, the sand-drifts, mourning and bellowing,
Lows in rage beholding that white shape, the limbs of it,
dragged by the grey wolf-cubs : who shall their hunger
stay ?
Theirs the chance to seize it, hers the short forgetfulness.
Death is no mean archer. Mark how his arrows hit.
Stopped she then at night-fall, while the rain in long furrows
scored the bush-grown hill-slopes, ceaseless the drip of it,

Dripped on her dark back-line, poured abroad abundantly :
not a star the heaven showed, cloud-hung the pall of it ;
One tree all her shelter, standing broad-branched, separate
at the sand-hills' edge-line, steep-set the sides of them.
She, the white cow, shone there through the dark night
luminous,

like a pearl of deep-seas, freed from the string of it.
Thus till morn, till day-dawn folded back night's canopy ;
then she fled bewildered, sliding the feet of her,
Fled through the rain lakelets, to the pool Suwáyada,
all a seven nights' fasting twinned with the days of them,
Till despaired she wholly, till her udder milk-stricken
shrank, so full to feed him suckling or weaning him.
Voices now she hears near, human tones, they startle her,
though to her eye naught is : Man ! he, the bane of her !
Seeketh a safe issue, the forenoon through listening,
now in front, behind now, fearing her enemy.

And they failed, the archers. Loosed they then to deal with
her
fine-trained hounds, the lop-eared, slender the sides of
them.

These outran her lightly. Turned she swift her horns on
them,
like twin spears of Sámhar, sharp-set the points of them.
Well she knew her danger, knew if her fence failed with
them

hers must be the red death. Hence her wrath's strategy.
And she slew Kasábi, foremost hound of all of them,
stretched the brach in blood there, ay, and Sukhám of
them.

Thus is she, my nága. When at noon the plains quiver
and the hills dance sun-steeped, cloaked in the heat-
tremors,

Ride I and my deeds do, nor forbear from wantoning,
lest the fools should shame me, blame me the fault-finders.

Do not thou misprize me, thou Nowára. One am I
binder of all love-knots, ay, and love's sunderer ;
One who when love fails him, wails not long but flies from it ;
one whom one alone holds, hard death the hinderer.
What dost thou of mirth know, glorious nights, ah, how
many :
cold nor heat might mar them, spent in good company ?
Came I thus discoursing to his sign, the wine-seller's,
drank at the flag-hoisting, drank till the wine grew dear,
Bidding up each full skin : black with age the brand of it,
pouring forth the tarred jars, breaking the seals of them ;
Pure deep draughts of morning, while she played, the sweet
singer
fingering the lute-strings, showing her skill to me.
Ere the cock had crowed once, a first cup was quaffed
by me :
ere slow man had stretched him, gone was the second cup.
On what dawns sharp-winded clothed have I the cold with it,
dawns that held the North-wind reined in the hands of
them.
Well have I my tribe served, brought them aid and
armament,
slept, my mare's reins round me, night-long their sentinel ;
Ridden forth at day-dawn, climbed the high-heaped sand-
ridges
hard by the foe's marches, dun-red the slopes of them ;
Watched till the red sun dipped hand-like in obscurity,
till the night lay curtained, shrouding our weaknesses ;
And I came down riding, my mare's neck held loftily
as a palm fruit-laden : woe to the gatherer !
Swift was she, an ostrich ; galloped she how wrathfully,
from her sides the sweat streamed, lightening the ribs
of her ;

Strained on her her saddle ; dripped with wet the neck of her,
the white foam-flakes wreathing, edging the girth of her ;
Thrusteth her neck forward, shaketh her reins galloping ;
flieth as the doves fly bound for the water-springs.

At the King's Court strangers thronged from what far
provinces,

each athirst for bounty, fearing indignity.

Stiff-necked they as lions in their hate, the pride of them,
came with stubborn proud feet, Jinns of the wilderness.

Stopped I their vain boastings, took no ill-tongued words
from them,

let them not take licence. What were their chiefs to me ?

I it was provided camels for their slaughtering,

I who their shares portioned, drawing the lots for them.

Every mouth I feasted. Barren mount and milch-camel
slew I for all daily. All shared the meat of them.

Far guest and near neighbour, every man rose satisfied,
full as in Tebála, fed as in green valleys.

Ay, the poor my tent filled, thin poor souls like sick-camels,
nágas at a tomb tied, bare-backed, no shirt on them.

Loud the winter winds howled ; piled we high the meat-
dishes ;

flowed the streams of fatness, feeding the fatherless.

Thus the tribes were trysted ; nor failed we the provident
to name one, a wise man, fair-tongued, as judge for them,

One who the spoil portioned, gave to each his just measure,
spake to all unfearing, gave or refused to give,

A just judge, a tribe-sheykh, wise, fair-worded, bountiful,
sweet of face to all men, feared by the warriors.

Noble we ; our fathers wielded power bequeathed to them,
dealt law to the nations, each tribe its lawgiver.

All our lineage faultless, no light words our promises ;
not for us the vain thoughts, passions of common men.
Thou fool foe, take warning, whatso the Lord portioneth
hold it a gift granted, dealt thee in equity.
Loyalty our gift was, faith unstained our heritage ;
these fair things He gave us, He the distributor.
For for us a mansion built He, brave the height of it,
lodged therein our old men, ay, and the youths of us,
All that bore our burdens, all in our tribe's sore sorrow,
all that were our horsemen, all our high councillors.
Like the Spring are these men, joy to them that wait on
them,
to the weak, the widows, towers in adversity.
Thus our kin stands faith-firm, purged of tribe-malingerers.
Woe be to all false friends ! Woe to the envious !

ÁNTARA

How many singers before me ! Are there yet songs unsung ?

Dost thou, my sad soul, remember where was her dwelling-place ?

Tents in Jiwá, the fair wádi, speak ye to me of her.

Fair house of 'Abla my true love, blessing and joy to thee !

Doubting I paused in the pastures, seeking her camel-tracks, high on my swift-trotting nága tall as a citadel,

Weaving a dream of the past days, days when she dwelt in them,

'Abla, my true love, in Házzen, Sammán, Mutathéllemi.

There on the sand lay the hearth-stones, black in their emptiness,

desolate more for the loved ones fled with Om Héythami,

Fled to the land of the lions, roarers importunate.

Daily my quest of thee darkens, daughter of Mákhrami.

Truly at first sight I loved her, I who had slain her kin, ay, by the life of thy father, not in inconstancy.

Love, thou hast taken possession. Deem it not otherwise.

Thou in my heart art the first one, first in nobility.

How shall I win to her people ? Far in Anéyzateyn

feed they their flocks in the Spring-time, we in the Gháïlem.

Yet it was thou, my beloved, willed we should sunder thus,

bridled thyself the swift striders, black night encompassing.

Fear in my heart lay a captive, seeing their camel-herds

herded as waiting a burden, close to the tents of them,

Browsing on berries of khímkhim, forty-two milch-camels,

black as the underwing feathers set in the raven's wing.

Then was it 'Abla enslaved thee showing her tenderness,
white teeth with lips for the kissing: sweet was the
taste of them,

Sweet as the vials of odours sold by the musk sellers,
fragrant the white teeth she showed thee, fragrant the
mouth of her.

So is a garden new planted fresh in its greenery,
watered by soft-falling raindrops, treadless, untenanted.
Lo, on it rain-clouds have lighted, soft showers, no hail in
them,

leaving each furrow a lakelet bright as a silverling.
Pattering, plashing they fell there, rains at the sunsetting,
wide-spreading runlets of water, streams of fertility,
Mixed with the humming of bees' wings droning the day-
light long,

never a pause in their chaunting, gay drinking-choruses.
Blithe iteration of bees' wings, wings struck in harmony,
sharply as steel on the flint-stone, light-handed smithy
strokes.

Sweet, thou shalt rest till the morning all the night lightly
there,

while I my red horse bestriding ride with the forayers.
Resting-place more than the saddle none have I, none
than he
war-horse of might in the rib-bones: deep is the girth
of him.

Say, shall a swift Shadaníeh bear me to her I love,
one under ban for the drinker, weaned of the foal of her,
One with the tail carried archwise, long though the march
hath been,

one with the firm foot atrample, threading the labyrinths?
Lo, how she spurneth the sand-dunes, like to the ear-less one,
him with the feet set together: round him young ostriches

Troop like the cohorts of Yémen, herded by 'Ajemis,
 she-camel cohorts of Yémen, herded by stammerers.
 Watching a beacon they follow, led by the crown of him
 carried aloft as a howdah, howdah where damsels sit,
 Him the small-headed, returning, fur-furnished Ethiop,
 black slave, to Thu-el-Ashíra : there lie his eggs in it.
 Lo, how my nága hath drunken deeply in Dóhradeyn ;
 how hath she shrunk back in Déylam, pools of the enemy,
 Shrunk from its perilous cisterns, scared by the hunting one,
 great-headed shrieker of evening, clutched to the flank
 of her.

Still to her off-side she shrinketh, deemeth the led-cat there
 Clawing the more that she turneth ;—thus is her fear of
 them.

Lo, she hath knelt in Ridá-a, pleased there and murmuring
 soft as the sweet-fluting rushes crushed by the weight of
 her.

Thickly as pitch from the boiling oozeth the sweat of her,
 pitch from the cauldron new-lighted, fire at the sides of it,
 Oozeth in drops from the ear-roots. Wrathful and bold is she,
 proud in her gait as a stallion hearing the battle-cry.

Though thou thy fair face concealest still in thy veil from me,
 yet am I he that hath captured horse-riders how many !
 Give me the praise of my fair deeds. Lady, thou knowest it,
 kindly am I and forbearing, save when wrong presseth me.
 Only when evil assaileth, deal I with bitterness ;
 then am I cruel in vengeance, bitter as colocynth.

Sometime in wine was my solace. Good wine, I drank of it,
 suaging the heat of the evening, paying in white money,
 Quaffing in goblets of saffron, pale-streaked with ivory,
 hard at my hand their companion, the flask to the left of me.

Truly thus bibbing I squandered half my inheritance ;
yet was my honour a wide word. No man had wounded it.
Since that when sober my dew-fall rained no less generous :
thou too, who knowest my nature, thou too be bountiful !
How many loved of the fair ones have I not buffeted,
youths overthrown ! Ha, the blood-streams shrill from
the veins of them.
Swift-stroke two-handed I smote him, thrust through the
ribs of him ;
forth flowed the stream of his life-blood red as anemone.
Ask of the horsemen of Málek, O thou his progeny,
all they have seen of my high deeds. Then shalt thou
learn of them
How that I singly among them, clad in war's panoply,
stout on my war-horse the swift one charged at their
chivalry.
Lo, how he rusheth, the fierce one, singly in midst of them,
waiting anon for the archers closing in front of us.
They that were nearest in battle, they be my proof to thee
how they have quailed at my war-cry, felt my urbanity.
Many and proud are their heroes, fear-striking warriors,
men who nor flee nor surrender, yielding not easily.
Yet hath my right arm o'erborne them, thrust them aside
from me,
laid in their proud backs the long spear : slender the
shaft of it.
See, how it splitteth asunder mail-coat and armouring ;
not the most valiant a refuge hath from the point of it.
Slain on the ground have I left him, prey to the lion's brood,
feast of the wrists and the fingers. Ha, for the sacrifice !

Heavy his mail-coat, its sutures, lo, I divided them
piercing the joints of the champion ; brave was the badge
of him.

Quick-handed he with the arrows, cast in the winter-time,
 raider of wine-sellers' sign-boards, blamed as a prodigal.
 He, when he saw me down riding, making my point at him,
 showed me his white teeth in terror, nay, but not smilingly.
 All the day long did we joust it. Then were his finger tips
 stained as though dipped in the íthlem, dyed with the
 dragon's blood,
 Till with a spear-thrust I pierced him, once and again with it,
 last, with a blade of the Indies, fine steel its tempering,
 Smote him, the hero of stature, tall as a tamarisk,
 kinglike, in sandals of dun hide, noblest of all of them.

Oh, thou, my lamb, the forbidden ! prize of competitors,
 why did they bid me not love thee ? why art thou veiled
 from me ?

Sent I my hand-maiden spy-like : Go thou, I said to her,
 bring me the news of my true love, news in veracity.
 Go. And she went, and returning : These in unguardedness
 sit, and thy fair lamb among them, waiting thy archery.
 Then was it turned she towards me, fawn-necked in gentleness,
 noble in bearing, gazelle-like, milk-white the lip of it.

Woe for the baseness of 'Amru, lord of ingratitude !
 Verily thanklessness turneth souls from humanity.
 Close have I kept to the war-words thy father once spoke
 to me,
 how I should deal in the death-play, when lips part and
 teeth glitter,
 When in the thick of the combat heroes unflinchingly
 cry in men's ears their defiance, danger forgot by them.
 Close have I kept them and stood forth their shield from the
 enemy,
 calling on all with my war-cries, circling and challenging.

There where the horsemen rode strongest I rode out in front
of them,

hurled forth my war-shout and charged them ; no man
thought blame of me.

Antar ! they cried ; and their lances, well-cords in slenderness,
pressed to the breast of my war-horse still as I pressed on
them.

Doggedly strove we and rode we. Ha, the brave stallion !
now is his breast dyed with blood-drops, his star-front
with fear of them !

Swerved he, as pierced by the spear-points. Then in his
beautiful

eyes stood the tears of appealing, words inarticulate.

If he had learned our man's language, then had he called to me :
if he had known our tongue's secret, then had he cried to me.

Thus to my soul came consoling ; grief passed away from it
hearing the heroes applauding, shouting : Ho, Antar, ho !

Deep through the sand-drifts the horsemen charged with
teeth grimly set,

urging their war-steeds, the strong-limbed, weight bearers
all of them.

Swift the delúls too I urged them, spurred by my eagerness
forward to high deeds of daring, deeds of audacity.

Only I feared lest untimely drear death should shorten me
ere on the dark sons of Démдем vengeance was filled
for me.

These are the men that reviled me, struck though I struck
them not,

vowed me to bloodshed and evil or ere I troubled them.

Nay, let their hatred o'erbear me ! I care not. The sire
of them

slain lies for wild beasts and vultures. Ha ! for the
sacrifice !

IBN KOLTHUM

HA ! The bowl ! Fill it high, a fair morning wine-cup !
Leave we naught of the lees of Andarína.
Rise, pour forth, be it mixed, let it foam like saffron !
tempered thus will we drink it, ay, free-handed.
Him who grieves shall it cure, his despites forgotten ;
nay, but taste it in tears, it shall console thee.
He, the hoarder of wealth, with the hard face fear-lined,
whilst he tasteth, behold him freely giving.
Thou, O mother of Amru, the cup deniest ;
yet, the right is the wine should pass thy right-hand.
Not the worst of thy three friends is he thou scornest,
he for whom thou hast poured no draught of morning.
O the cups that I quaffed in Baálabékki !
O the bowls of Damascus, Kaisarína !
Sad fate stands at the door, and uninvited
takes us marked for his own at the hour predestined.

Hold, draw rein, ere we sunder, sweet camel-rider ;
list awhile to my words, nor idly answer.
Wait. Of thee would I know how came the estrangement,
whence this haste to betray a friend too faithful ?
Tell the fear of that day, what blows ! what woundings !
what refreshment I poured on thy kin's eyelids !
Each to-day is foredoomed. And who knows to-morrow,
who the after of days, the years we see not ?

She her beauty shall show thee, if thou shouldst find her
far from injurious eyes, in desert places.

Fair white arms shall she show, as a white she-camel's,
pure as hers the long-necked one, yet unmounted.
Twin breasts smooth, shalt thou see, as of ivory polished,
guarded close from the eyes, the hands of lovers.
Waist how supple, how slim ! Thou shalt span it sweetly ;
fair flanks sloped to thine eyes and downward bending.
Broad her hips for desire, than thy tent door wider ;
nay, but thine is her waist, thine own for madness.
Ankles twain, as of marble, are hers. I hear them
clanking, clattering on, as her anklets rattle.
None hath grieved as I grieve, not she, Om Sákin,
roaring loud for her lost one, her colt-camel.
None hath grieved as I grieve, not she, the mother
mourning nine of her sons, her home their red grave.
So recalled I youth's time, and aloud with longing
wept at thought of her gone, her howdah fleeting,
Till before me the plain of Yemáma spreading
flashed, its points in the sun like a foe unsheathing.

O thou Lord Ibn Hind, be thy wrath less quick-breathed ;
wait the word of our mouth, the whole truth spoken,
How each day we ride forth, our banners pure-white,
how each night we return, our banners red-dyed.
Days of fighting had we, and of joyous glory,
whilst we smote at the king, his dues denying,
Whilst we vanquished the man their tribes had named
king,
him, the chief they had crowned, their world's protector.
Stood our horses before him asweat with combat,
wreathed the reins on their necks, their hind-feet resting.
Near him built we our tents, Dhu-tulúh our outpost,
El Shamáat at our hand, his riders routed.
Fled the dogs of their tribes from our spear-points howling ;
lo, their thorn we have cut from root to branches.

They who came to our wheat-mill have known our mill-stones;
they who came for our corn have been stayed for grinding.
Let the mill-cloth be spread in the East lands Nejd-wards;
be our corn the Kodáat, their tribes assembled.
You as guests to our door in your guile came smiling;
see, the high feast is served, yourselves the banquet.
Fairly entertained we and plied with victual;
just at dawn it began, our mill-stone grinding.
We the tribes have supplied, have up-held their charges,
borne the burden alone they laid upon us.
Pierced have we with our spear-points their backs the fleers,
smitten low with our swords and pruned their proud
ones.
Lances black of the Khótti are ours, how slender,
swords that hiss in our hands, to impale and pare them.
Yea, the heads of their mighty have rolled before us,
loads let loose on a road from beasts unburdened.
Still with might we assailed, we pushed, we pressed them,
lopped their heads at the neck, laid bare their shoulders.
Hate for hate have we given, in deeds revealing
all the strength of our wrong, our long-pent anger.
Heirs are we of our wrath, as Maád well knoweth;
glory deal-we and wounds, as our right proveth.
When surprise is our lot and the tent-roofs tumble,
—sudden raid of the foe—we defend our neighbours.
Bite we sharp with our swords, nor apportion mercy,
swift ere these shall have seen the hand that smites them.
Reckless we in the mêlée, our swords with their swords;
wooden swords you had deemed theirs in hands of children;
Deemed our garments and theirs, their robes and our robes,
dyed had been in the vats—so red a purple!
Men there were in their fear held back and faltered;
terror clutched at their lips, their fate before them.
We alone, like Mount Ráhwa unmoved, in squadrons
stood protecting the weak, their battle-winners.

All we held in our youth to be slain for glory,
ay, and our gray-beard fighters, our old campaigners,
Doughty challengers we of them, all ill-comers,
Girt for crossing of swords, their sons with our sons,
This day going in fear of our children's fair lives,
faring forth in a band and as swift dispersing ;
That day freed and secure, the alarm forgotten,
raiding we in our turn on a far-off foray.
Ours the Captain of Júshm, our chief Ibn Béker,
Breaker he of the tribes, of the weak, the strong tribes.
Not again shall they tell it, the envious nations,
how we humbled our heads awhile before them.
Not again shall they fool us or jest against us ;
lo, the cheek of the proud with pride we out-cheek.

Tell us, Prince Ibn Hind, on what guile thou buildest ?
how should we to thy kingship yield obedience ?
Tell us, 'Amru the King, by what subtle reason
dreamest thou to cajole our slandered homage ?
Words—nay, threats—thou hast hurled. But O 'Amru,
softly !
these were well for thy slaves, thy mother's bondsmen.
Think ! Our lances, how oft have other foemen
failed, before thee, to bend them, to make them pliant.
So the lance-head of iron which bites the lance-shaft,
twists to grip of the hand and makes a weapon ;
Stiff it grows in the grasp, till aloft it jangles,
rives the head of the foe and his who forged it.
Who has dared thee to tell of Júshm Ibn Béker,
him as wanting in war, our proud forefather ?
Are not we too of 'Alkama, heirs in glory,
his, the fortress of fame ? To-day we hold it.
Come not we of Muhálhil ? Nay, more and better,
come not we of Zohéyr, of the nobles noblest.

Ours Attáb and Kolthúm, in ascent our fathers ;
we the heirs of their fame, our first possession.
We with Búрати too, as all wot, claim kinship,
him, the shield of the weak, as we too shield them.
All are ours, and Koléyb the renowned great fighter.
Whatso is in the world of fame is our fame.
Who dares link our she-camel with his, lo, straightway
broken lieth the neck-rope, the neck too broken.
Firm are we in our faith. Thou shalt find none surer,
no such men of their word to bind and loosen.
We, the day of the beacons on high Khazára,
gave, and more, of our aid than all the aiders.
We the strong-hold of Thú-urát held how stoutly,
starved our nágas within it on what lean pasture !
We the right wing defended, the day of battle ;
next us fought too the left wing, no less our brethren.
Whoso stood in their path have beheld them charging ;
whoso paused on our way we slew before us.
These returned with the plunder, with wealth made captive,
we with lords in our train and kings in fetters.
Ho, ye children of Béker, aroint ye, boasters !
Know ye nought of our name ? Must ye learn our
glory ?
Nay, ye know of our valour, our hands with your hands,
fights how fierce with the spears, with the arrows
singing.
Helmets ours are of steel, stout shields from Yémen,
tall the swords in our hands and poised for striking.
Mail-coats ours ; in the sun you have seen them gleaming ;
hauberks wide for our swords, of a noble wideness.
Ay, and after the fight, you have seen us naked,
creased the skin of our limbs like leathern jerkins,
Seen the bend of our backs, where the armour pressed
us,
scored with waves, like a pool the South-wind blowing.

Lo, the mares we bestride at the dawn of battle !
sleek-coat mares, the choice ones ; ourselves have weaned
them.

Charge they mail-clad together, how red with battle,
red the knots of their reins as dyed with blood-stains.
Are not these the inheritance of our fathers ?
shall not we to our sons in turn bequeath them ?
We the vanguard in arms ? Behind us marching
trail our beautiful ones, our wives close-guarded.
They it was who imposed on our lives a promise,
still their badge to uphold from all assaulting,
Ay, and plunder to bring, fair mares and helmets,
noble prisoners, bound with ropes, to serve them.
Thus go we to the war. And behold, the clansmen
seized with fear of us fly and form alliance,
While our maidens advance with a proud gait swaying,
like to drinkers of wine, with spoils o'erladen,
Camel-riders each one, of Júshm Ibn Béker,
beauty theirs and the blood, and all noble virtues,
Feeders sure of our mares. Yet they tell us lightly :
none will we for our lovers, save the valiant.
Since the fence of the fair is but this, the sword-stroke,
this, the shredding of limbs as a plaything shredded.
Thus say they, and we hear them, our swords unsheathing
yet are all men our sons who kneel before us.
Heads we toss of the proud, as you see a ball tossed,
kicked in play by the youths that urge the football.
All men know us of old in Maád, the tribesmen,
when our tents we have built in the open pastures,
Feasters are we of men with the men that love us,
slayers are we of men, the men that hate us ;
Rightful lords of the plain, to forgive and welcome ;
where we will we have pitched. Who has dared gainsay us ?

Still with ire we deny in the face of anger ;
still with smiles we accede to smiles of pleading.
Faithful aye to the weak who have made submission ;
ruthless aye to the proud who raise rebellion.
Ours the right of the wells, of the springs untroubled ;
theirs the dregs of the plain, the rain-pools trampled.
Nay, but ask of the tribes, of Tømmáh, Domíyan,
what the worth of our hands, of our hearts in battle.
Nay, but ask of the King, when he came to bend us,
what of pride we returned to his words of evil.
Lo, the lands we o'errun, till the plains grow narrow,
lo, the seas will we sack with our war-galleys.
Not a weanling of ours but shall win to manhood,
find the world at his knees, its great ones kneeling.

EL · HÁRITH

LIGHTLY took she her leave of me, Asmá-u,
went no whit as a guest who outstays a welcome ;
Went forgetting our trysts, Burkát Shemmá-u,
all the joys of our love, our love's home, Khalsá-u.
Muhayyátu, she thee forgets, Sifáhu,
thee, Fitákon, Aádibon, thee Wafá-u.
Thee, Riád el Katá, thee, vale of Shérbub,
'Anak, thee, Shobatána, and thee, Ablá-u.
Nay, ye lost are to me with my lost glory ;
nay, though tears be my meat, weeping wins no woman.
Yet, a snare to my eyes, afar was kindled
fire by night on the hill. It was Hind's love-beacon.
Blindly now do I watch her from Khezáza ;
woe, the warmth of it, woe,—though the hilltops redden !
Woe its blaze from Akík, its flame from Shákhseyn !
woe the signal alight for me, Hind's love-incense !

Out on tears and despair ! I go free, sundered ;
here stand doors of relief. Who hath fled escapeth.
Mount I light on my nága. No hen ostrich
swift as she, the tall trotter, her brood behind her,
Hearing voices who fled from them, the hunters,
pressing fast on her way from mid-eve to nightfall.
Nay, behold her, my noble one, upheaving
motes and dust on her path, as a cloud pursuing.
All un-shoed are the feet of her, her sandals
strewn how wide on her road by the rough rocks loosened.
Joy thus take I on her, the summer heat through.
All but I had despaired,—like a blinded camel.

O the curse of men's eyes, of their ill-speaking :
 Danger deep and a wound did their false lips deal us.
 Have not these with their tongues made small things great
 things,
 telling lies of our lives, our kind kin, the Arákim ?
 Mixing blame with un-blame for us, till flouted
 stand we, proven of wrong, with the guilty guiltless.
 All, say these, that have run with us the wild ass,
 ours are they, our allies, as our own tribe their tribes.
 Thus by night did they argue it and plot it,
 rose at dawn to their treason and stood forth shouting.
 Loud the noise of their wrath. This called, that answered ;
 great the neighings of steeds and the camel roarings.

Ho, thou weaver of wild words, thou tale-painter !
 must it thus be for ever and thus with Amru ?
 Not that slanders are strange. Their words we heed not ;
 long ere this have we known them, their lips, the liars.
 High above them we live. Hate may not harm us,
 fenced in towers of renown, our unstained bright honour.
 Long hath anger assailed us, rage, denial ;
 long hath evil prevailed in the eyes of evil.
 Nathless, let them assault. As well may Fortune
 hurl its spears at the rocks, at the cloud-robed mountains.
 Frowneth wide of it Fear. Fate shall not shake it.
 Time's worst hand of distress shall disturb it never.

O thou king Irámiyan ! With thee circle
 riders keen of their steel to cut off thy foemen.
 King art thou, the all-just, of Earth's high walkers
 foremost, first in the World, its all-praise surpassing.
 If of wrong there be aught untamed, unstraightened,
 bring but word to our chiefs ; they shall deal out justice

Set thy gaze on the hills, on Mílha, Sákir.

See the slain unavenged, while alive their slayers.
 Probe the wounds of our anger, though thou hurt us,
 yet shall truth be approved and the falsehood flouted.
 Else be thou of us silent, and we silent,
 closing lids on our wrong, though the mote lies under.
 Yet, refusing the peace, whomso you question,
 he shall speak in our praise, shall assign us worship.

O the days of the war, of our free fighting,
 raidings made in surprise, the retreats, the shoutings !
 How our nágas we scourged from Sâf el Bahreyn,
 pressing hard to the end, to our goal El Hása !
 Turned had we on Temím before Mohárrem,
 taken their daughters for wives, their maids for hand-
 maids.

None might stay us nor strive with us. The stoutest
 turned, though turning availed not nor their feet flying,
 Nay, nor mountain might hide nor plain protect them ;
 blackness burnt in the sun, it might bring no succour.
 Thou, O King, art the master. Where in all lands
 standeth one of thy height ? There is none beside thee.

Lo, how stiff was our stand for him, El Mónidir.

Say, were we, as were these, Ibn Hind's base herdsmen ?
 Let the Tághlebi slain in their blood answer,
 unavenged where they lie. In the dust we spilled it.
 He, the king, when in that high place Ma'súna's
 tent he builded for her who so loved Ausá-u,
 What of turbulent folk did he there gather,
 broken men of the tribes, ragged, hungry vultures !
 Dates and water to all he gave in bounty.
 God's revenge on the guilty they called his soldiers.

You the weight of them proved with your mad challenge,
brought them blind on your back by your idle boasting.
Nay, they gave you no false words, laid no ambush ;
broad before you at noon you beheld them marching.
Ho, thou bearer of tales to Amru, babbler !
when of this shall the end be, how soon the silence ?
Proofs he hath at our hands, three honest tokens,
each enough for his eyes of our faith unswerving.
First when came from Shakík at him the war-lords,
all Maád in their tribes, with each clan a banner.
Mail-clad men were there there, their chieftain Káis,
he, the Prince Karathíyan, a rock, a stronghold.
With him sons of the brave, of freeborn ladies ;
naught might stand to their shock save alone our sword-
blades.
Them we drove back with wounds like the out-rushing
streams when goat-skins are pricked ; it was thus their
blood flowed ;
Drove them back to Thahlána its strong places,
scattered, drenched in their gore where the thigh wounds
spouted.
Struck we stern at the lives of them ; then trembled
deep our spears in their well, like a long-rope bucket.
Only God shall appraise how we misused them ;
none hath claimed for their lives the uncounted blood price.
Next with Hójra it was, Ibn om Katáma ;
with him rode the Iráni : how red their armour !
Roused, a lion, he chargeth, his feet thudding,
yet as Spring to the poor in their day of hunger.
Chains we struck from the hands of Imr el Káis ;
long the days of his grief were, his months of bondage.
We, when Jaun of Aál Beni 'Aus sought us,
rock-strong with him a band of unyielding horsemen,
Nothing feared, though the dust of them around us
swept the plain like a smoke by the war-flame kindled.

Put we swords on his neck, Ghassán, for Móndir,
 wrath that less than our right was the blood price counted.
 Lastly brought we the nine of the blood royal,
 all their wealth in our hands, an unnumbered booty.
 Amr a son was of ours Ibn Om Eyyási ;
 close in kinship he came, when he gave the dowry.
 Let this stand to our count, our power in pleading !
 land with land are we knit, by the strong ones
 strengthened.
 Hold the tongue of your boasting, your vainglory,
 else be yourselves the blind, on yourselves ill-fortune.

O, remember the oath of Thil Majázi,
 all that was of old time, the fair words, the pledges.
 Flee the evil, the hate ! Shall men gainsay it,
 that which stands on the skin, for the whim of any ?
 Think how we with yourselves the fair deed signed there,
 did the thing we should do, and no less, our duty.
 Faction all and injustice ! As well, when feasting,
 take, for vow of a sheep, a gazelle in payment !
 Was it ours, say, the blame of it all, when Kíndah
 took your booths for a spoil, that of us you claim it ?
 Was it ours that foul deed of him, Eyádi ?
 are we bound with his rope, like a loaded camel ?
 Not by us were these done to their death, nor Káis,
 nay, nor Jéndal by us, nor he Haddá-u.
 Theirs, not ours, were the crimes of Beni Atíkeh ;
 clean of blame are our hands since you tore the treaties.
 Eighty went of Temím : in their right hands lances ;
 each a sentence of death, when they went against you,
 Let your sons where they lay sword-slashed and blood-stained,
 brought a tumult of spoil till men's ears were deafened.
 Is it ours the ill-deed of the man Hanífa ?
 ours the strife of all time, Earth's arrears of evil ?

Ours the wrong of Kodáat ? Nay, 'tis all injustice ;
not for these and their sins are our hands indicted.
Not for these, nor their raid on the Béni Rázah ;
who shall approve their claim in Nitá, in Búrka ?
Long they cringed for a spoil, these camel-cravers,
yet not one did we give, not a black nor white one ;
Left them bare till they fled with their backs broken,
all unwatered their thirst, unassuaged their vengeance ;
Horsemen hard on their track, El Fellak's riders,
pity none in their hand, in their heart no sparing.
Ours it was, the dominion of all these peoples,
ours till El Móndir ruled, the sweet rain of heaven.

Thou, O King, art the master. Thou our witness
stoodst the day of Hayáreyn. Our proof is proven !

THE STEALING OF THE MARE
AN ARABIAN EPIC OF THE
TENTH CENTURY

THE STEALING OF THE MARE

I

IN the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate !
He who narrateth this tale is ABU OBEYD, and he saith :

When I took note and perceived that the souls of men were in pleasure to hear good stories, and that their ears were comforted and that they made good cheer in the listening, then called I to mind the tale of the Agheyli Jaber and his mare, and of all that befell him and his people. For this is a story of wonderful adventure and marvellous stratagems, and a tale which when one heareth he desireth to have it evermore in remembrance as a delight tasted once by him and not forgotten.

And the telling of it is this :

The Emir Abu Zeyd the Helali Salameh was sitting one morning in his tent with the Arabs of the Beni Helal and the Lords of the tribe. And lo, there appeared before them in the desert the figure of one wandering to and fro alone. And this was Ghanimeh. And the Emir Abu Zeyd said to his slave Abul Komsan, "Go forth thou, and read me the errand of this fair Lady and bring me word again." And Abul Komsan went forth as he was bidden, and presently returned to them with a smiling countenance, and he said, "O my Lord, there is the best of news for thee, for this is one that hath come a guest to thee, and she desireth something of thee, for fate hath oppressed her and troubles sore are on her head. And she hath told

me all her story and the reason of her coming, and that it is from her great sorrow of mind ; for she had once an husband, and his name was Dagher abul Jud, a great one of the Arabs. And to them was born a son named Amer ibn el Keram, and the boy's uncle's name was En Naaman. And when the father died, then the uncle possessed himself of all the inheritance, and he drove forth the widow from the tribe ; and he hath kept the boy as a herder of his camels ; and this for seven years. And Ghanimeh all that time was in longing for her son. But at the end of the seventh year she returned to seek the boy. Then Naaman struck her and drove her forth. And Amer, too, the boy, his nephew, is in trouble, for Naaman will not now yield to the boy that he should marry his daughter, though she was promised to him, and he hath betrothed her to another. And when Amer begged him for the girl (for the great ones of the tribe pitied the boy, and there had interceded for him fifty-and-five of the princes), he answered, ' Nay, that may not be, not though in denying it I should taste of the cup of evil things. But, if he be truly desirous of the girl and would share all things with me in my good fortune, then let him bring me the mare of the Agheyli Jaber,—and the warriors be witness of my word thereto.' But when the men of the tribe heard this talk, they said to one another : ' There is none able to do this thing but only Abu Zeyd.' And thus hath this lady come to thee. And I entreat thee, my lord, look into her business and do for her what is needful."

And when Abu Zeyd heard this word of his slave Abul Komsan he rejoiced exceedingly, and his heart waxed big within him, and he threw his cloak as a gift to Abul Komsan, and he bade him go to the Lady Ghanimeh and treat her with all honour, for, " I needs," said he, " must see to her affairs and quiet her mind." So Abul Komsan returned to her, and he built for her a tent, and did all that was

needed. And Abu Zeyd bade him attend upon her and bring her dresses of honour and all things meet for her service.

Then began the Narrator to sing :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd the Helali Salameh :

(Woe is me, my heart is a fire, a fire that burneth !)

On a Friday morning once, I sat with three companions,

I in my tent, the fourth of four, with the sons of Amer.

Sudden I raised my eyes and gazed at the breadth of the desert,

Searching the void afar, the empty hills and the valleys ;

Lo, in the midmost waste a form, where the rainways
sundered,

Wandering uncertain round in doubt, with steps of a
stranger.

Turned I to Abul Komsan, my slave, and straightway I
bade him,

“ Ho, thou master of signs, expound to us this new comer.”

Abul Komsan arose and went, and anon returning,

“ Fortune fair,” said he, “ I bring and a noble token.

O my Lord Abu Zeyd,” he cried, and his lips were smiling,

“ Here is a guest of renown for thee, a stranger, a lady,

One for the wounding of hearts, a dame of illustrious
lineage,

One whose heart is on fire with grief, and sorely afflicted.”

The dark one threw off his cloak to Abul Komsan in guerdon,

Even I, Abu Zeyd Salameh, the while my companions

Rose with me all as I rose in my place, we four rejoicing,

Hassan and Abu Kheyl Diab, and the Kadi Faïd.

And first of them Hassan spake and said, “ Is my name
not Hassan ?

Sultan and chief and lord am I of the lords of the Bedu.

Shall not my tent stand free to all, to each guest that
cometh ?

So God send her to me, be they hers, two thousand camels."
And Abu Kheyl uprose, and with him the Kadi Faïd.

"And I," said he, "no less will give to this dame two thousand."

Nor was the Kadi slow to speak: "Though this pen and paper

All my poor fortune be," said he, "I will name her thirty."

But I, Salameh, said, "By my faith, these gifts were little; Mine be a larger vow." And I swore an oath and I promised

All that she would to bring, nay, all her soul demanded, Even a service of fear, a thing from the land of danger.

And thus they sat in discourse till the hour of noon was upon them,

And the caller called to prayer, and the great ones prayed assembled;

And these too in their place, and they stood in prayer together.

And when they had made an end of praises and prostrations,

Back to the tent came they, and still behold the lady

Wandering in doubt uncertain there with steps of a stranger.

Then to the desert went I forth, and I called and I shouted,

"Marhaba, welcome to thee," I cried, "thou illustrious lady,

Welcomes as many be to thee as the leagues thou hast wandered."

And she, "I seek the hero, the Knight of Helal ibn Amer, Bring me to him, the renowned of might, the hero of Amer."

And I, "I hear and obey, though I am not of the great ones.

Raise thy eyes and behold him here, the Sultan Hassan,

And with him Abu Musa Diab, the light of Zoghat,

Best of the swordsmen he, and our learned Kadi Faïd,

The reader of the word, the learnedest of the learned,

And with them Aziz ed Din and El Hajin and Amer,
Fifty and five of the best, Fulano and Fulano.
These be men of their word ; asking thou shalt obtain it :
Ask thou all that thou wilt, even all thy soul desireth.”
But she, “ Nay, thou dost mock, thou slave and idle talker,
Not of these would I hear nor of other than Salameh,
Salameh Abu Zeyd, Chief of Helal ibn Amer.
Why art thou mute of him for whom my soul is kindled ? ”
And I, “ Myself am he, the Helali Salameh,
Welcome to thee, and welcome as wide as thou hast
wandered.”

And she prayed, “ O Abu Zeyd, behold me here thy stranger.
A boon I ask, O dark one, a mighty deed of daring.
Thy suppliant am I, thou son of Risk Salameh,
From the distress of time behold my tears are flowing.
For this one boon behold me pleading here before thee.
I have tasted Fortune’s change. I plead by the day of
judgment.”

And I, “ What is thy want, O Lady, that I grant it ?
All, to the cord, I give, so thy tears cease from flowing.”
And she, “ O man admired ! A great one was my husband,
A knight, a prince of lineage, Abul Jud Dagher,
A man of mighty wealth, stored up in many houses,
Wealth whose sole catalogue were a library of volumes.
He dying left behind with me our one son Amer,
To me and to the hate of an ill-minded uncle.
For when that Abul Jud was gathered to his fathers,
And sent from his loved home to death’s unjoyful dwellings,
Behold this Naaman, this man he called his brother,
In arms against our house, he with his evil-doers,
Raiding all our wealth and making Amer captive.
Thus weeping did I flee, and seven long years an exile
Bore I his heart with me like a bird ever flying.
And then, the seven years done, to the dear place forbidden
Turned I in my love and my sweet son’s remembrance.

And when he saw me near he called to me, ' O mother,
Behold me in what straits I lie through men of evil
(And these may God requite !). Seven years behold me
outcast,

Herd the flocks afar each day in the lone desert,
And in my uncle's tent nightly a guest unwelcome.
Yet was there one with me, his daughter fair, Betina,
Whom I, as of little count, might wander with unquestioned
Until but few days since. But now another suitor
Asking her hand hath come, and with him brave com-
panions.

And for this suitor's sake am I forbid her presence.
And what then, O my mother, shall I do, my mother,
Who have neither riches, though my soul is generous,
Nor wile nor stratagem in my life's little wisdom ?
How shall I win to her, this fair child of my uncle ?
How shall I answer her, her greetings night and morning ?'
Thus spake he, and I heard, and with a heart of anger
Went I forth with him my son, and to the tribesmen
Pleaded in every tent his cause, we two as suppliants,
Calling on all their chiefs to give the hand of succour.
And fifty and five of them were those who lent agreement,
This one and that with joy, Fulano and Fulano.
And with them Selman was, Abul Jud el Aser.
And Jafferi was there, Khalifa ibn Nasser,
And many more of note. And they rose and went assembled
To the council of the king, and found him there in judgment
Set with his valiant men, and meting out obedience.
And when En Naaman saw them he cried to them in
welcome :

' Sit ye, O chiefs, with me,' and made their place beside
him.

And when he found them mute and of their manner bashful,
' Ye have come,' said he, ' to speak of him, my brother's
orphan.'

And they, 'Ay, of a truth. We ask for him Betina.'

And he, 'Be short of words. From me ye shall get no lying.

Nasser hath come for her, and with him a brave dowry.

This one, what hath he (speak) beside his beggar's portion ?'

And they, 'But we will give. So be thy mind unburdened,

And his, too, of the doubt. We stand to thee his guarants.'

And Selman spake, 'Behold it, to the last coin, his dowry.'

And Jafferi, 'Nor less, things needed for the wedding.

All that thou wilt we bring, a gift to thee and Amer.'

Then answered them the hero, En Naaman, the chieftain :

'List to my word, O chiefs, O generous-minded princes.

Let him but bring one thing, the thing my soul desireth,

So shall I stand content, nor ask a further dowry,

Necklace, nor chain, nor ring, nor ornament of silver,

Nor silk, nor brodered robe, and, lo, my word is on it.

He shall be to me a son, and I will love him truly,

More than a brother's son, in all things first and foremost.

But come he empty-handed, the girl shall be another's.'

And so with a pious phrase the hero left them wondering.

And straightway questioned all, 'And what is this, O Naaman ?'

Laughing he made reply, 'The mare of Agheyli Jaber.'

Then on the chiefs assembled there fell as it were a tremor,

And each man looked at each, nor made they further pleading,

Only with whispered looks the thought passed round in silence,

'This thing can no man bring, nor he were a Jinn in cunning,

Not though on wings he flew.' But Amer in his longing,

Swore he the deed would do for sake of her, Betina.

And when I learned it all, how it had fared in council,

From my poor head the wits, O Sheykh Salameh, wandered.

And since that day of trouble (listen, O Helali !)

Around the world of men have I in anguish wandered,
Seeking of kings and chiefs and princes of the Arabs
Which one shall help our case, and all in turn have answered,
' This is a deed of deeds meet only for Salameh.
There is but one thy help, he of Helal ibn Amer.'
Thus have I come to thee on my soul's faith, Salameh,
Thee the champion proved of all whose hearts are doubting,
Thee the doer of right, the scourge of the oppressor,
Thee the breeze in autumn, thee the winter's coolness,
Thee the morning's warmth after a night of watching,
Thee the wanderer's joy, well of the living water,
Thee to thy foeman's lips as colocynth of the desert,
Thee the river Nile, in the full day of his flooding,
When he hath mounted high and covereth the islands.
Behold me thus for thee clothed in the robes of amber.
Beyond thee there is none save the sole Lord of pity.
Thou art my last appeal, O Helali Salameh,
Glory of the Arabs, beauty of all beholders."
Thus then spoke Ghanimeh, and Abu Zeyd made answer,
" Nay, but a thousand welcomes, O thou mother of Amer,
Welcomes as many be as the leagues thy feet have wandered.
Fear thou nought at our hand, nay, only but fair dealing."
And the hero Abu Zeyd called to his servant loudly :
" Forth, O Abul Komsan, nor let thy footsteps linger."
And the slave said, " Yes and yes, O thou beloved of the
Arabs."

And he, " Go with this lady and build her a pavilion,
With breadths of perfumed silk, and bid prepare all dainties
That she may eat of the best, and serve her in due honour.
For well it is in life to be of all things generous,
Ere we are called away to death's unjoyful dwellings,
Even of the shoulder meat, that the guests may rise up
praising."

And Abul Komsan went and all things set in order,
Even as he was bid, at the word of his lord Salameh.

Said the Narrator :

And, when the lady had made an end of talking, then agreed the Emir Abu Zeyd to all her desires, and he delivered her into the hand of Abul Komsan, and bade him to do her honour and to serve her in his own person, and not through the persons of others, and he gave him his commands, saying : " Take charge of her thus and thus, the while I go forth and see diligently to her affairs." And Abul Komsan did as he was commanded.

And immediately the Emir Abu Zeyd arose and went into his own tent and took out a herdsman's wallet and a lute, and went forth in disguise as a singer, of the singers of ballads. And thus travestied he came to the Assembly that he might take his leave of the Sultan Hassan and of the rest. And Hassan said to him, " O Mukheymer, whither goest thou, and what is thy design ? " And Abu Zeyd made answer, " I am of a mind to journey abroad, even to the land of the Agheyli Jaber." And so he disclosed to him all his plan, both what was without and what was within, the manifest and the hidden. And as he spoke behold the Sultan's countenance changed, and he grew pale, and " Goest thou," said he, " to the land of our enemy, and takest thou from us the light of thy countenance ? Leave now this adventure, and we will determine all things as is best for the fair lady." But Abu Zeyd said : " Nay, for the like of me that were a disgrace and a shame, and need is that I go : ay, though I were given to drink of the cup of confusion, yet must I go forward." And Diab said, " May no such disgrace befall thee, nor confusion, for this would be to us all a sign that thou lackedst understanding." And Abu Zeyd said, " Lengthen not thy words." And the Kadi calling to the others, said, " My mind is that you should prevent him, even if it were by force, from his purpose, nor let him go." But when Abu Zeyd heard that word of the Kadi his wrath flamed

forth, and he said, "How! would ye deal with me in this wise, with me, the Emir Abu Zeyd?"

Now the ears of the tribe were filled with these sayings, and their mouths with the noise of them. But none was able to turn Abu Zeyd from his way. And his sister Rih came to dissuade him. Yet he listened not to her words, but soothed and consoled her only, and bade her farewell. And he departed on his quest, going by the desolate valleys of the desert.

Then once more the Narrator singeth:

Saith the hero, Abu Zeyd Salameh Mukheymer:

"Needs must I haste abroad to the wide breadths of desert,

What though I fare afar to death's unjoyful dwellings?
Constrained of my guest I go to do her pleasure's bidding."

And speaking thus he turned and went to his pavilion,
And clothed himself anew in his most cheerful raiment,
Lengthening his kaftan's sleeves and rolling broad his turban,

Till in disguise he stood, a singer of the singers,
With wallet in his hand and lute for his sole armour,
But in his head what store of strategy and cunning!
And thus to the Divan, wherein the chiefs assembled
Crowded all the floor as it were the market of Amer.
And when the Sultan Hassan beheld him at the tent ropes,

Loudly he cried to him, "Thou goest forth? And whither?"

Tell us, O Abu Zeyd, what meaneth this thy venture?"

And I, Salameh, said, "It is a thing of honour.

A lady came to me, O Hassan, one a stranger,

To ask a deed of me, and my own tongue hath bound me.

For when I cried to her, 'What is thy need, O lady?'

She answered, 'This I need, the mare of Agheyli Jaber.'

And the Sultan Hassan hearing, struck his two palms together,

And he cried, "O Abu Helal, thine is a case of evil.

How hast thou staked thy life? Nay, rather leave this daring.

Thine shall the camels be—ay, even the two thousand."

And I, "Alas, for shame! Such failure were unseemly.

Or will I bring the mare or stand no more among ye,

Nay, though my way be death." Then answered Abu Musa,

"Madman thou art and fool. This is beyond thy winning, Not though thy back grew wings." And I, "Forbear vain pleadings.

Base surely were the man less prompt to do than promise."

But next the Kadi came and fingered at his turban,

And with him Rih my sister, and she called to him, "Helali, Wilt thou not stay this champion?" And I, "Nay, hold thy clamour

Lest I should cut thee short, even with this sword, my sister."

And the Kadi: "Hear, O people. This warrior is fool-hardy.

Bring forth the brazen fetters to bind this Father of Patience."

And hearing, Abu Zeyd was wrath with wrath exceeding,

And his hand set to his sword and "Ho," said he, "ye mad ones!

Talk ye to lay in fetter me who am named Salameh,

Me, the strength of Helal, who clothed the tribe in glory?

Nay, were it not for shame I would hew ye all in pieces."

And Rih cried, "Woe is me, the burning of my trouble!

How shall I quench this flame? Yet shall he take our blessing."

And I, "The word farewell is but a wound to the goer.

Cease, therefore, from thy tears." And weeping thus she left me.

But I my camel mounted and went my way in silence,
Going by paths unknown in the wide, trackless desert,
Nor turned my head again when they had turned back
silent.

Thus was our parting done. Shame rest with the gain-
sayer.

II

Said the Narrator :

And when Abu Zeyd had made an end of speaking, and the Kadi Diab and the Sultan and Rih, and all had happened as hath been said, then the Emir Abu Zeyd mounted his running camel and bade farewell to the Arabs and was gone ; and all they who remained behind were in fear thinking of his journey. But Abu Zeyd went on alone, nor stayed he before he came to the pastures of the Agheylat. And behold, in the first of their vallies as he journeyed onward the slaves of the Agheylat saw him and came upon him, threatening him with their spears, and they said to him, " O Sheykh, who and what art thou, and what is thy story, and the reason of thy coming ? " And he said to them, " O worthy men of the Arabs, I am a poet, of them that sing the praise of the generous and the blame of the niggardly." And they answered him, " A thousand welcomes, O poet." And they made him alight and treated him with honour until night came upon their feasting, nor did he depart from among them until the night had advanced to a third, but remained with them, singing songs of praise, and reciting lettered phrases, until they were stirred by his words and astonished at his eloquence. And at the end of all he arrived at the praise of the Agheyli Jaber. Then stopped they him and said : " He of whom thou speakest is the chieftain of our people, and he is a prince of the

generous. Go thou, therefore, to him, and he shall give thee all, even thy heart's desire." And he answered them, "Take ye care of my camel and keep her for me while I go forward to recite his praises, and on my return we will divide the gifts." And he left them. And as he went he set himself to devise a plan by which he might enter into the camp and entrap the Agheyli Jaber.

And the Narrator singeth of Abu Zeyd and of the herdsmen thus :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd Salameh Helali :

My tears flowed as I struck the swift one with her bridle,
Turning her to the desert. And fifteen days I journeyed,
Making of fifteen eight, for she was in fleetest training.
And running I came to the herds of Agheyli and beheld the
camels

Spread like locusts alit, and I knew my travel ended.
And lighting I stooped down, and tied her fast by the
foreleg,
And looked to right and to left. And presently the herds-
men

Came with the slaves around. And "O thou Sheykh"
they addressed me,
"Whence and what man art thou? our stranger guest or
a prowler?"

And I, "A poet am I, a singing man of the singers,
One from his youth afoot, the world's guest, and a stranger,
Singing the praise of kings, the generous-souled, the
noble."

And they, "A welcome, poet, to thee be eighty welcomes.
Make thou a verse for us, display us of thy cunning."

And I, "I hear and obey, a thousand times obedient."
And I clutched at my rebab and set her strings in order,
And took my bow in my hand, and making preparation
Struck the notes for a song of the songs of the Hejazi.

And I sang with reiteration, in four-and-twenty metres,
Hymns in praise of the great, the glorious one, the Prophet,
In measured phrase and verse, and afterwards recorded
Noble deeds of the world, the gathered sheaves of wisdom,
Giving to each its text. And last I came in my singing
To him the generous one, Fadel the Agheyli Jaber.
And they cried to me as I sang, "This Fadel is our chief-
tain.

If but thou go to him he shall reward thee fairly
With raiment of all choice, and jacynth stones and jewels,
Perfumes and broidered silks, and purple and fine linen."
And I, "Quick, hold my camel. Anon will I be with ye."
And the herdsman answered "Ay, and eighty thousand
welcomes.

If that thou bidedst a year, yet shall thy beast find
pasture."

And I took my lute in my hand and sought his tent, the
Agheyli,

Speaking low to myself, "O thou Hejazi Salameh,
This is thy day of deceit, the noontide of thy cunning.
See to thy stratagems." And I laid my wallet before me,
Pondering ways and designs how I might come to my
purpose.

Said the Narrator :

And when Abu Zeyd was on his way through the desert
making to himself a plan how he should come into his
foeman's camp unperceived, behold him of a sudden in
the midst of them. And he saw the men of Agheyli to
the right of him, and to the left, and in his front. And
with them in their midst he saw a fair young lady, very
beautiful to behold, with whom the fairest maidens of the
Arabs were in converse. And the maiden turned her eyes
to the desert and to the hills, and she perceived him coming.
And she sent a young girl of those near her towards him.

And the girl met him among the sand dunes and asked him "Who and whence art thou, and what is thy business?" And he told her that he was a traveller, of the pedlars who sell necklaces to the young maidens, and also that he was an hungred. And she brought him food and he ate, praising the Giver of all. And returning the girl told her mistress of his desire to serve her, and she bade him thread pearls upon a string and make settings for precious stones. And at once he set him to his work, and the young girl watched him. And he asked of her concerning the tents of her people and concerning the country where she lived. And she told him that the tents were set in three camps apart, and the first camp was for Fadel the Agheyli Jaber, and the second was for his daughter the Princess Alia and for the daughters of the Princes, and the third camp was for the mare. And she praised the worth of the mare and of her owner. And he said to her, "In this mare are there four qualities, and three of the four are for joy, but one is for joy and sorrow." And when she heard this word the girl was very wroth, and she turned upon him and said, "Of a truth thou art no honest guest, but even a spy and a traitor, and for this purpose art thou come hither, to pry into that which is hidden."

And the Emir Abu Zeyd fled to the desert, and to himself he said, "When they of the camp shall be sleeping, then will I return and steal the mare and flee with her away." And night fell, and he sat him down beneath a tree.

Then once more the Narrator singeth :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd Salameh Helali :

"Save me, O Lord, from hurt and the contradiction of evil,

Take me, O Lord, by the hand, O Thou who hast power almighty,

Thou who dost clothe with a veil, be Thou my guard and protector ! ”
And I asked of the Merciful strength and patience to accomplish,
Walking thus through the land of doubt, a land which is barren.
And I reached my hand to my wallet and found in it things needful,
And I took from it an onion and an egg-shell of the ostrich,
And made a fire on the ground with twigs of the wild willow,
And in a golden bowl I mixed and turned the ingredients.
Then whitened I my beard and limned my face in wrinkles,
Lowering my brows a little and darkening one of my eyelids,
And I crooked my back like a bow, a bow bent for the shooting,
And donned my clothes of disguise, that seeing none might know me.
Thus sought I the plains of Agheyl when the sun was near to the westing,
And hunger pressed me hard, for hunger is ungracious ;
And I cast my eyes around, and lo, like the stars for number,
Stood the tents in their ranks, as it were the Pleiades in heaven,
Each a cluster of stars ; and among them a pavilion
Set for a leader of men ; and mares were tethered round it,
And dromedaries trained as it were for a distant riding ;
And hard beside a tent of silk, a fair refreshment
To the eyes as rain on the hills, the blest abode of women.
And next in a lofty place, set on a windy platform,
As it were a fortress in size, the booth of the great council,
Wonderful in its spread, its length full sixty paces.
And tears came to my eyes, for none in the world was like it.

And all around were slaves. And at the tent-ropes standing
Of a house of woven silk of the eighty there together,
I saw a damsel proud, the Agheyli Jaber's daughter :
Fifty attendants hers, mute girls who speak by signals.
And Alia from afar with her fair eyes beheld me,
And sent a maid to my help, of the maids that stood around
her :

Running she came to me, while her anklets rang and
clattered,
And her fair face shone like light, bent forward in her
running,
Shone like a moon in the dark, dividing her hair's blackness.
And I prepared my words as a talker doth who is cunning.
But she began, " O Sheykh of the Arabs, whence and
whither ?

Comest thou here a guest, or one of our foes, a prowler ? "

And I said to her, " Lady fair, the boon I ask is a break-
fast.

I am a hungry man, and hunger is ungracious.
Not till my lips have tasted food can I do thy bidding."
And she answered me, " O Sheykh, to thee be eighty
welcomes.

Hungry may no man be in the tent of Agheyli Jaber.
Here is of all abundance, and ever the guests uprising,
Praise his name who gave, a stream, a river of plenty.
Wait thou that I may bring what shall not leave thee
thankless."

And she left me and returned, and her hands were filled
with dainties,
Even with food for kings, meats worthy the world's great
ones.

And she stood before me in shame, as it were, a gazelle for
coyness,
Offering dates with her hands and butter and milk of
camels.

And I put my hand to the dates and still she pressed me
ever ;

And I drank of the milk my fill, she bidding me still
welcome,

Health and a thousand welcomes, and last she asked me
my story.

And I said to her, " Ay, truly, thy mind will I enlighten."

And she said, " Speak truth and tell, Art thou an honest
walker,

Or one that prowleth around ? " And I told her my
condition,

As one a stringer of gems, a necklace-maker for damsels.

And she went and came again, and " Thus," she said,
" saith Alia,

Wouldst thou rejoice her heart, then weave her a chain of
value."

And I, " Then bring the wool, the first shorn of the
camel."

And she brought me all I desired, and I wove the necklace
fairly,

Linking it like a chain. And I laid the threads together

And ended all with a knot, and I strung it thick with
rubies,

Reciting still as I wove new texts from the Holy Scripture.

And I charged her that her mistress should wear it night
and morning.

And she went and she returned. And " Thus," said she,
" saith Alia :

Since that the night is at hand do thou remain in our
dwellings.

Meat is for thee and raiment." And I, " As thy queen
desireth.

Yet, O thou fair one, say, Whose house is this pavilion ?

And who the warriors round ? Belike they guard them a
treasure."

And she, "That is nought to thee, so thou be an honest walker.

Rather hold thy peace, lest these around suspect thee.

This is the tent of Alia, and that of the Prince Agheyli,
And that the third, apart, of the mare of Agheyli Jaber,
The grey mare, the renowned : in the world there is none
like her,

Not with the Persian kings, the Chosroës, the Irani.

Spare is her head and lean, her ears set close together ;

Her forelock is a net, her forehead a lamp lighted,

Illumining the tribe, her neck curved like a palm branch,

Her wither clean and sharp. Upon her chest and throttle

An amulet hangs of gold. Her forelegs are twin lances.

Her hoofs fly forward faster ever than flies the whirlwind.

Her tail bone held aloft, yet the hairs sweep the gravel ;

Her height twice eight, sixteen, taller than all the horses.

Here are her virtues told in full enumeration,

Dear to her master's eye as gold and precious jewels."

And the grooms who heard her said, "Let not this guest
despise her."

But she, "Nay, verily ; so ye but fasten the hobbles."

And Salameh heard their talk and smiled, this prince of
deceivers,

And he said, "O maiden, hearken. I have a thing for thy
hearing.

So thou but speakest truth, the mare is indeed of the coursers.

So thou but speakest truth, then are three flames ex-
tinguished,

But of the fourth, the fiercest, behold thou stirrest the
embers."

And the damsel heard him speak and answered straight
in anger :

"Bitter words are these, O Sheykh, as the edge of a dagger.

Nay, by thy tongue I know thee, thou art no Sheykh of
the great ones ;

Rather a prowler around, a spying thief of the camp-fires ;
One with a heart of blackness seeking our queen of coursers.
Verily this thy speech betrayeth thee for a traitor ;
Verily she who hath ears hath heard thy words in amazement.

Spying the land thou art come a traitor-guest to our pastures,
Spying and stealing away the mare of Agheyli Jaber.
Thus have I read thy riddle, the sense of thy dark saying.
One to thy ear hath been and told the fame of her glory,
Covetous-sick of the mare, in longing night and morning,
Till thou didst rise and spread thy cunning nets for her taking,

Hoping to win renown and hie thee home to thy people.
These three things thou hast shown, the quenching of thy heart-flames,

These three things, and the fourth to fire the wrath of her owner ;

Thus read I thy riddle, thy idle words I interpret.
Now therefore take this counsel, get thee gone from our dwellings.

Fly for the life thou hast nor linger here for its losing ;
Fly ere I send thee forth to death's unjoyful dwellings ;
Fly ere I spread the word and bring the Arabs upon thee,
Mounted on steeds of speed to question me of thy doings ;
And I shall tell them truth, and yield thee to the spear-points,

Nor shalt thou succour find nor any to show thee pity."

And Abu Zeyd was grieved for what he had said to the damsel,

Yet took he courage and cried, " Enough of this fool's talking.

Never may fate befriend me if it have sense or meaning.
Ha ! the mare, what is she that I should wish for or win her ?
Never in all my days have I bent my leg to a saddle,
Being of those unskilled, and little apt in the learning."

He spoke, and rose to go in anger, he the dark one ;
And she too to the camp, to her own tribe and people,
Even to Alia's tent. But presently Salameh
Passed on his way in doubt and fear and consternation,
Thinking of those her words, hers with the plaited tresses,
And, " O thou," to himself he said, " thou innocent-
minded !

Thou forsooth the father of wiles, the old deceiver !
How hath she laid thee bare and cozened thy beguiling,
Reading all thy thought and making plain thy plottings !
And she is gone from thee, and thou art alone unfriended,
A stranger among foes, and who shall give thee shelter ? "

Then on his musing fell the depth of night and of darkness,
And still Salameh pondered grieving his black fortune.
And when it was fully night he cast his eyes in a circle,
Where he might win a lodging in the wide, naked desert.
And he spoke again to himself, " Salameh, thou the Hejazi,
Now is thy hour to do, the occasion of thy cunning,
For well hath the poet sung, he, Ibn Arus the singer,
' The black night fell on the world, and lo, in its trail the
proowler.' "

And musing thus he passed beyond the farthest camp-
fires,
Till lo, a spreading tree at his hand with low-set branches.
And Abu Zeyd rejoiced and entered within its borders,
" And here," said he, " will I rest, and sit me down till
the midnight,
Even till the break of dawn when the camp shall be
unguarded,
And I in my steps may turn unseen and all things
accomplish,
Making prize of the mare, and so to my own people."

III

Said the Narrator :

And when Abu Zeyd had sat him down beneath the tree, behold him in a great anguish and trepidation and sorrow. And to him presently waiting thus there came a form approaching through the darkness, and he was astonished, and he said to himself, "What can this thing be? Climb rather, thou, O Abu Zeyd, into this tree, so that thou be hidden and learn that which shall come about." And he climbed into the tree's branches like unto a raging leopard and watched narrowly the coming of the man, who stopped beneath the tree. And the comer was Sahel ibn Aäf; and Sahel waited looking ever to the right and to the left, and so till a third of the night was over. But at the last there came to him a lady, an exceedingly fair woman, and her name was Zohwa, the daughter of Nasser the Agheyli. And these two had between them an understanding of love, and he had promised that he would come that night to the tree, and she that she would meet him there. And he had waited long for her coming, until his heart was on the boil with his love and with the fire kindled within him. And he, even when she was come to him, believed hardly that he saw her with his eyes. And he went out to meet her and he asked her the reason of her delay. And she answered, "I waited for the eyes to sleep and until my father and my mother should be in their dreams, and as soon as they slept I came to thee. And now do with me all that thou wilt, for I am here before thee, nor am I miserly of my regard." And on hearing this he forgave her, and he kissed her face, and she kissed his face, and they sat down and began to discourse together, Abu Zeyd the while crouching above and listening to their words. And he had a mind, for shame's sake, to slay them both; but

he said to himself, "Let us first see how it shall happen." And they fell to talking of the gossip of the Arabs, and presently they spoke of Alia. And Sahel became troubled and he said to Zohwa, "O that I could behold her! O that thou couldst bring her hither!" And she asked of him, "Why so? Is she then more beautiful than I? Are her eyes more fairly painted?" And he said, "Not so. But listen. I have had with her an adventure. It happened to me thus, that I was abroad in the desert and that I came to a certain fountain of sweet water, even that fountain in the which if one shall wash his garments he shall remain ever in health. And, as I approached it, behold the daughters of the princes of Agheyl seated on the banks of the stream, and their hair was loosened from the plaits, and I saw that their hair was dark as the descending night and that their eyes were painted with kohl. And looking thus and perceiving their beauty I became as one bewildered, nor could I turn away my eyes but remained staring and gazing, until at the last one of them was aware of me and called to the others, "Cover your faces, O girls, for there is a man hard by and I have seen him." And Alia turned and saw me. And her anger was lit and she unloosed her tongue against me. And the others besought her that she should tell all to her father; and so turning they left me in great fear and apprehension of the trouble that might come of it. And I threw myself upon my face in the desert and I resolved that I would not return to the tents, for I mistrusted that Alia would give news of it to her father, and that he would seek my life and give me to taste of the cup of evil things. And so truly spake she of it to her father and told him all as it had happened. And he went out against me and came to my tent, and finding me not he slew my father in my place, and afterwards made it known that whosoever should find and kill Sahel the same should receive of him a reward,

even all that he should ask for. And now, O Zohwa, I have but this one desire, to avenge the blood of my father by her destruction and to soothe my soul with slaying her, and after that I care not what may come, not though they hew me to pieces with their swords. And surely the news of her death at my hand would travel abroad and grieve the heart of Fadel and wound him so that he too should die."

And when Zohwa heard this story she bade him to be of good comfort, for that she would bring him to his heart's desire. And she said, "I will fetch thee Alia hither, and in a short space, for this is no far-off matter. Wait only until I return to thee, for see, my soul is not niggardly to thee of its regard."

And she left him and returned to the tents, and she sought the pavilion of the Princess Alia. And Alia, when she saw Zohwa, rose and went forward to meet her and made her sit beside her and inquired the cause of her coming. And Zohwa said, "O my lady, I am in a great perplexity, and therefore am I come to thee." And she sat down beside her and told her a long tale of trouble and kept her thus talking through the night, and soothed her with soft words, deceiving her and flattering her with fair speeches of praise until she touched her heart with her cunning, nor did she cease from discoursing until a second third of the night was spent and there remained but these two awake of all the camp which was sleeping. Then Zohwa arose as if to go and she asked for leave to depart, but Alia besought her that she should stay with her and sleep there in the tent beside her. And Zohwa said, "Of a truth that would be before all things pleasant and for an honour to me, but I have been at pains to escape unperceived from my people and to them must I return." And Alia hearing, was moved to pity and she said, "Go then." And Zohwa went out of the tent and on a little

way, but presently returned trembling as a ship trembles when it is struck by the wind, and she showed manifold signs of terror. And Alia asked her, "What aileth thee then?" And she answered, "O lady, I am overcome with lack of courage. And surely thou art responsible for me; but wilt thou not come with me a little way?" But Alia said, "Nay. For if I should go with thee, who afterwards should return with me? And see, the guards are sleeping, and my damsels every one of them. Nor am I too without danger of enemies who might do me a hurt, and, more than the rest, of that dog Sahel ibn Aäf." And Zohwa answered quickly, "Say not so, O lady. And how should Sahel hurt thee, or how should any other, seeing that thou art the daughter of the prince of our tribe, the greatest of the princes, whose fame is in all the valleys? And yet thou speakest thus, thou daughter of the generous? Nay, it is no far journey. Listen: between thy tents and ours are but ten furlongs, for the space hath been stepped by the trackers, and if thou wilt come but one-half the road thou canst then turn back and I will go forward, and the way will have been thus divided between us and each will have accompanied the other and fear shall have been outwitted." And Alia stopped at this agreement, for her wit failed her. And she arose and went with Zohwa out of the camp. And Zohwa's tongue wagged as they walked so that the way seemed short, and Alia lost reckoning in the darkness. And thus they came to the headland which stood at their mid-journey. And Alia knew nothing until, coming near the tree, suddenly Sahel leaped forth upon them. And Alia knew that it was he, and she cried aloud in fear. But Sahel seized hold of her by her neck ornaments and swore that if she cried out he would even cut off her head. And he began to use base language, and he said, "Now will I be avenged of the blood: and by the faith of the Arabs

need is that I shall slay thee." And she said, "To thy honour I appeal, O Sahel. So may God requite thee and save thee from the rage of Abu Zeyd the Helali."

And her heart became straitened, and her tears overran her cheeks, and she knew that that traitress had entrapped her. And she entreated him, saying, "First only let me recite the prayer, that the pang of death be assuaged." But he laughed at her words, and said, "If thou be of the blameless, pray on." And he went to Zohwa and kissed her, and Alia beheld it and wept at what had befallen her, appealing still to his honour. But he treated her scornfully, saying, "Dost thou not know him, this dog, this dog of dogs, this wolf, this slave, this jackal of the great? If thou hadst him in thy hand thou wouldst surely make him to drink of the cup of evil things. Now, therefore, behold, there is no escape for thee from the hand of the slayer."

And when Alia heard this she sundered herself from created things and turned her soul to the Recompenser and the Avenger, and her prayer was not hidden from the Maker of the Earth and from Him who upholdeth the skies. And she prayed with her arms extended. And the Princess Alia did not cease from her prayer to her Lord until Sahel had drawn his sword from his sheath and was pressing on her to seize her.

And she cried out: "To my help, O Arabs! To my help, O strangers!" And suddenly a semblance and a form swooped down on them from above, as it were the coming of a lion from the tree. And behold, one with a drawn sword exceeding sharp, who cried, "Haass! Haass! Hold off from her, thou base born of the Arabs!" And when Sahel saw him his understanding left him and he was as one dazed and Zohwa with him, and they trembled. But Alia rejoiced, though she knew not from whence this champion had come down to her. And Abu Zeyd struck

Sahel ibn Aäf so that his head fell back behind him. And the girl too he took and slew, and cast their bodies into a hollow place that the beasts of the field might devour them. And when he had done this he returned to Alia and undid her hands. And he bade her return to her tent and tell no man what had happened to her, of her people.

And the Narrator once more singeth :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd Salameh Helali :

For that which befell that night have my tears flowed
unceasing,

For that which that night befell, as I alone in the desert
Turned to the right and the left my eyes (they are no
deceivers),

For I saw one come to the tree as though in search for a
shelter.

And I said to my soul : " O soul, climb thou and watch
the achievement."

And my soul swung lightly aloft, and lay in wait in the
branches.

And he came as if to a tryst with one of the daughters of
Adam,

Even a tryst, O people, with one of our fairest daughters.

And an hour passed, and behold a lady too in the dark-
ness,

Who said " Be thy evening good, O son of a noble father."

And he, " Two thousand greetings to thee and tokens of
fortune.

These—but what hath delayed thee, alas ! thou daughter
of Nasser ? "

And she said, " O worthy of praise, O Sahel, I watched
and I waited,

Even till all should sleep, my father first and my mother,

And one by one my sisters and brothers. But when night
held them,

And all lay fast in the fetters of sleep, I arose for thy pleasure."

And Zohwa came to his side, and they sat on a mound together.

And he, the dog, looked into her face, and each the other's Neck with their arms embraced. And I said to myself

"Salameh,

Wait thou in patience on (for he who hath seen is the wiser),

And hear of them their tale and learn the fate and the judgment."

And their talk was of their neighbours. And anon he spoke of Alia.

And she said, "I will bring her hither that thou mayst fill thy vengeance.

Thou shalt be quits with her, with her of the plaited tresses : Even to-night will I bring her. But tell me first, and truly, Are her eyes darker rimmed than mine, more kohled, more painted ? "

But he, "Nay, nought of this. The trouble is far other.

Rather list to my tale of woe and of strange adventure,

A tale of fear and pain, a brimming over of trouble.

For thus it was, to my hurt one day on my best courser

Rode I forth to the spring, the fountain of Ridaä,

There be there pleasant winds, full scented with rich odours,

Sweeter than scent of flowers ; and if a garment touch it, Ten days and more with musk shall it remain in fragrance.

Forth by the dales I rode and travelled in my yearning,

Till to my gladdened eyes behold, the fount Ridaä,

And at the waterside the damsels and the daughters,

Alia with all her band. And hence my earliest trouble.

For I saw them there unseen, this goodly band of damsels, Dark, with their hair unbound, and those fair moons, their faces,

(For some were as crescent moons, some half moons and some full moons)

With brows divinely knit for their sad lovers' dooming,
And eyes aflame to smite and pierce his soul like lances,
And red cheeks, every one a rosebud newly blossomed,
And noses curved and keen and finely shaped as sabres,
Sabres upheld aloft in the skilled hands of swordsmen,
And mouths like lover's knots, and teeth agleam like jewels,
And necks, the wild roe's neck, on lavender new pastured
And shih and all the herbs, the sweetest of the desert.

By this was I undone. And one of the maidens saw me,
Sprang like a fawn in fear, and called to her companions,
'Alia! Ho, ye damsels, daughters of the great ones!
Here is one watching us, one spying in the desert.'
And all looked up and saw where I stood plain, unhidden.
And Alia cursing, cried, 'O base son of perdition,
Evil be on thy head.' And they called to her and
questioned

'Who, then, is this bold man, hath dared be thus familiar
With us the noble ones, the daughters of the Sultans?'
And she said, 'He is none but Sahel, Sahel the son of Aäf,
He of the evil word with sole shame for his fortune.'

And they bade her go to her father for that the prince
might know it,

And so take vengeance due. And Alia straight departed.
And the sun had hardly risen ere he, the lady's father,
Fell on my sire with the sword. And I fled before his
anger,

Weeping, to lands afar, and stripped of all, an outcast;
For Jaber took our herds and servants and possessions,
Two hundred fair milch camels, and my red mare, the
swift one;

And twenty months have gone since I beheld my people
Or knew the sweets of home. O Zohwa, shouldst thou
bring her,

This Alia, to my power, thou shouldst behold a judgment,
A tale of death for her, and for her father sorrow,
Noised on the tongues of men till the last day of dooming."
And she, "I hear and obey, a thousand times obedient.
Death shall be surely hers, and a supreme destruction."
And he, "Then compass thou the occasion of her coming."
And she, "So shall it be, thou glory of beholders."
And he, "Be up and doing, for lo, the short night waneth."
And she quickened her pace and went and came to the
tent of Alia.

And she drew the curtain aside and Alia rose to greet
her :

"Welcome to thee, O Zohwa, welcome, thou daughter of
Nasser,

How doth it fare with thee ? Thou comest on what
errand ?

Speak, what thou wilt is thine, even all thy heart desireth."

And Zohwa spoke dissembling, "My duty brought me
hither,

This and my love for thee and my great debt of reverence.

I came to-night to thee in thought to do thee service,

For fair discourse of friends is to the soul an unguent."

And Alia bade her welcome, ay, even eighty welcomes,

And made her entertainment, for her heart smiled within
her.

And Zohwa clothed her words in garments of affection,

And so talked through the night, two thirds of the night ;
but after

Rose she and bade farewell. And Alia pressed her nearly,

"Wilt thou not bide with me, for see, the short night
turneth,

Hardly an end is left, thy couch shall be spread quickly."

And she protested, "Nay, of a truth I dare not linger.

None know that I am here, of my own house and people ;

Rather, if there be kindness, come with me thou a little,

Half of my road, with me, O thou of the beautiful necklace."

And Alia, "Nay, in the night I too have cause of danger; The son of Aäf is my foe. Sahel, I fear him, the plotter."

And she, "Who is he, this man, this dog of the sons of the Arabs,

That thou shouldst fear his intent who art the daughter of Jaber?"

And Alia, hearing, arose and went and stood by the tent ropes

And lingered there without, while Zohwa with false phrases, Wiled her still to her way. And she said, "My heart forebodeth,

There is one lying in wait, even he the son of perdition.

Let me return within." But Zohwa, "Wherefore fear him?

Is not thy father's name a terror in all the marches?

Shall it not shield thee from ill, though sooth the wicked be many?"

So they went forth together. And Alia's eyes misgave her Seeing a form in the dark. And she called out "What thing art thou?

Art thou a passer by, or one with intent a prowler?"

And he, the approacher, said, "Now truly art thou taken, Captured as in a net, and the Maker of Earth and Heaven Yieldeth thee to my hand and blindeth thee to thy peril."

And Sahel began to curse her, and to the tree he drew her.

And she knew her hour was come, and her heart within was shaken.

And he clutched with violent hands at her necklace as for strangling,

Till at his feet on the stones she fell. Ah! pitiful maiden.

And he bound her with cords and cried, "Confess thy faith ere thou diest."

And she entreated him, saying, "O Sahel, wilt thou not spare me?"

So may the Lord requite thee." But he, "There is no sparing."

And to Zohwa she cried "This is he I feared, the son of perdition,

And thou thyself art deceiver." But she answered her with tauntings,

"Be it so, I deceived thee. Go to. We shall see this Sahel

Prove himself of his skill when he loppeth thee, legs and shoulders."

But Alia prayed to Sahel, "Do thou recite the Fatha, So shall the cup of death to my lips be found less bitter."

But he answered, "Wert thou blameless, so truly would I recite it;

The Fatha is not for thee." But she wailed aloud and lamented,

"Alas, what death is mine. And, if he were here, my father!"

And he asked: "Who then is he, thy father, O thou proud one?"

Nay, but humble thyself." But she called the more, "Oh, hear me!

God will visit this sin on thee and on her, ye traitors.

Do thou but grant my demand and make my death less bitter.

For he who dieth not on the day shall fall on the morrow, And he who scapeth the sword, the same by the spear is smitten,

For all things have their days and courses and appointments."

And he said, "I grant thee respite. And after will I smite thee

And give the death thou fearest." And he spoke aside to Zohwa,

"Sit we awhile apart." And Alia raised up weeping

Her beautiful eyes to Heaven, and she prayed to Him who
hath pity,

“ O Thou searcher of hearts,” she said, “ who knoweth the
secrets

Even of every heart, to Thee I look for compassion.

Thou the merciful One, the Eternal, the most Mighty,

Thou who art of Thyself, the giver of consolation,

Thou the pitiful One, to Thee I come in my sorrow,

Calling on Thee by the name of Thy deeds, the might of

Thy wonders

Done for those Thou didst choose to Thyself against un-
believers.

To the prayers of the just I appeal that Thou protect me
and succour,

Staying the hand of the wicked man the son of perdition.”

And to Ibn Aäf she said, “ I appeal to thee of thy honour,
So may the Lord thee spare, and heal thy soul of its blind-
ness,

Guarding thy head from the day of wrath, the spear of
Salameh,

From Abu Zeyd the dealer of blows, the lion avenger.”

But Sahel answered, “ Nay, by the Prophet I will not
spare thee,

Not though Abu Zeyd were here himself the Helali.

For what is Abu Zeyd ? Let him help thee, thou dog’s
daughter !

Let him deliver thee from my hand, thou daughter of Jaber !

Are we not, we the Agheylat, secure in our pastures ?

He, the Helali foe, where is he ? In some far dirra,

Pasturing flocks of his own. He shall not help thee nor
succour.”

But she, “ Yet if God so willed he were here even now upon
thee.”

And Sahel, “ Hold thy peace, for to-night thy life hath
ending.

What shall Salameh do to thy help in these our pastures ?
The wolf is not as the lion in the manner of his seizing.
Were he here, Abu Zeyd, even now in this hour of speaking,
Him would I smite to death and leave in his blood to
perish."

And Abu Zeyd from the tree heard all the words between
them,

And my mind rose to her help as a full pot boiling over,
And I heard my name in their mouths, and my heart grew
hot within me,

Like a pitcher from the well which brims and spills with
fulness.

For why should Sahel slay her, and I not stand between
them ?

Sahel his sword hath drawn and leapt on her with cursings
The while she cryeth aloud. But I too cried, "Take
courage.

Lo, I am here to thy hand, one able for thy burden."

And of a sudden I dropped and ran to the three that
struggled.

And Sahel I seized by the throat and dragged towards
destruction.

And he cried, "Who art thou and whence and what the
way of thy sending ?"

And I, "From Death the King am I come to take
possession.

Life is weary of thee, and Death's edge presseth nearly."

And he, "O Sheykh of Afrits, wilt thou not spare the
sword stroke ?

Lo, I turn from my sin in thought of the day of judgment."

But I, "Thou art but a heathen. Thou didst refuse the
verses.

Thou hast denied Our Lord. Thy heart is an unbeliever's.
Thou hast done a treacherous deed. Thou hast angered
thy Creator,

Purposing death to souls, and therefore will I slay thee.
For were it not for this, thy infidel denial
Thus in act of thy God, my hand should spare to smite
thee,
Since that I love not strife nor is there blood between us.”
And I put my hand to my sword and drew it from the
scabbard,
And it flashed as lightning flasheth, making a flame in the
darkness,
And I smote him with its edge and his head flew from his
shoulders.
And turning next on Zohwa I smote her too, while Alia
Watched with the eyes of thanks the issue of the sword
stroke.
And I severed the cord from her wrists, and she rose and
took her bracelets.
And I bade her go in peace nor speak a word of the doings,
When morning light should come, to tribesman or to
kinsman,
For ever the mouth is blest that holdeth its own counsel.

IV

Said the Narrator :

Now when the Princess Alia had made her petition to the Maker of the Heavens, and her deliverance had been wrought by Abu Zeyd with the slaying of her enemies, and he had said to her, “Return and say no word of this to thy friends,” she besought him, saying : “Nay, but by Him who commandeth all power, I will not return home until thou hast told me of thyself, who thou art and of what tribe and nation of the Arabs.” But he said to her, “Know, O Lady, that I am of the race of the Jinns and that our people are indeed Muslims obeying the Lord of the Universe, and I was sent to thee from the land of Syria

to deliver thee from that traitor, who was of the children of crime." But she answered him, "Yet are not the Jinns of thy quality. Rather tell me the truth. I adjure thee by Him who created thee and in whose shadow thou didst grow up, and who hath wrought blessings through thy hand." And being thus adjured he said, "O Alia, there were peril for me if I told thee truly all." But she answered, "Be not afraid. Though thou wert the Prince Abu Zeyd himself, the Helali, yet shouldst thou have security, ay, even he that great horseman." Then said he to her, "Stretch forth thy hand that we may make a covenant together, so shall God be our witness." And she said, "As thou wilt." Then they made them a covenant together in the name of God the Almighty, and their souls were loosed of their burden. And Abu Zeyd spoke to her and told her all, and said, "It was indeed none other than I that slew thy uncle, nor came I with a better purpose than to steal away that mare." And she said, "Now is my heart light and my trouble ended, and as for the mare, look for her at my hand and not through another road; for my uncle and my people, are they not at thy disposal? And if there hath been evil how shall we take vengeance now, for I and my wealth and my kindred, all that is mine is thine. And thou shalt not find us niggardly of our kindness to thee, nor shall we refuse thee aught, inasmuch as all that I might do for thee, whether I fast or whether I pray, whether I give or whether I bestow, never might I make up to thee for what I have received at thy hand. Therefore shall there evermore be kindness between us. Ay, and if thou be willing, come thou now to our camp." But he said to her, "O Alia, O fairest lady, know that this I cannot do, this I desire not." And when Alia heard this word, it deepened her regard for him, and she praised God who had ordered it that she should meet with one so honourable. And she perceived that to one such as was this brave

knight she could entrust her soul and all that was hers. And she entreated him, "Come with me to the tribe." But he, "Never can I come with thee." And still she besought him, saying, "Know this, O Hejazi Salameh, that I will not leave thee here nor depart from thee. And as to the mare, her will I deliver to thee and whatsoever else thou demandest. Nay, though it were my soul I would not deny it." But he answered her, "My mind is changed about the mare, nor would I now take her, for I fear lest they seeking and not finding her should suspect thee, O Alia, and trouble should come to thee of thy father. And have we not the grey mare of Diab with us, the Shohba, whom we may give to the lady, nor run this great risk for her sake?" But Alia insisting said, "Nay, that shall not be, nor care I what may come, not though I should taste of the cup of evil things. But if thou wilt not take the mare, then will I kill her and myself with her, and on thy head be it for her and for me." And Abu Zeyd consented, saying: "I will do what thee seemeth good. So may God prosper thy designing."

And the Narrator returned to his singing of that which happened between the Princess Alia and the Prince Abu Zeyd.

Saith the hero, Abu Zeyd Salameh Helali :

Thus was our meeting made, mine with the Princess Alia.
The cause in the beginning of all was a mother bereaved,
A mother who came in her need where I sat with the
chiefs assembled,

And told us her desire, the mare of Agheyli Jaber.

And I pledged my soul to her prayer I would bring the
mare, and straightway

Went I forth nor tarried, seeking his tent the Agheyli.

And I made my plot to entrap her, standing unknown
among them.

And how I came to this tree she knoweth it, Jaber's daughter,

And how with my hand I snatched her life from the hand of the wicked.

And I said to her, "Lady, return and be content with thy fortune,

Speak no word of it all, of that which hath befallen.

Keep thou close thy secret. So shall they do thee honour."

But she, "To return were grief, O dark one, sweetest of faces.

Nay, by an oath I adjure thee, even by the House, the Kaaba,

Tell me thy tribe and dirra, and who be thy nearest kinsmen."

And I, "I hear and obey. With the Jinns am I in kindred. Kings are we of the great, Berkhan is my father's brother, Shemhurish and Tayar are next to me for cousins."

But she, "Not so, the Jinns are not of thy human nature. Tell me the truth of thy tribe, and which of the sons of Adam :

All that thou hidest speak." And I said to her, "Behold me,

Now will I tell thee all (and may the deceivers perish).

Behold me, him who came to string for thee thy necklace, And thou gavest him dates to eat and for drink the milk of camels.

And thy damsel chid me saying, 'There is no nobility in thee.

By my faith thou art no Sheykh, rather a spy and a traitor.' And I was afar in Sham at the evening hour when thou calledst,

Crying aloud for help, and I snatched thee from thy peril."

And I said, "Now go in peace, thou daughter of the Princes."

But she held me by the neck and stretched her arms entreating.

“Tell me thy tale,” said she, “for know, I am Jaber’s daughter ;

Why shouldst thou fear to speak ? Tell of thy tribe and people,

And peace be with thee ever, even to the day of judgment.

Alia am I of Agheyl, and Fadel is my father :

First of the horsemen he, the mightiest, the most noble,

And my mother’s name Kanua, one of illustrious lineage.

Tell me thou of thy Arabs, thy house and thy connexion,

So shall my heart be at rest.” But I, “Alas, O Alia,

What if the news should fly, and thy tribe slay the stranger ?

Stretch forth thy hand to me, in covenant between us,

Whoso then shall betray, let him be as an unbeliever.”

And I stretched my hand to her hand and touched it with my fingers.

And its softness made me wonder, and its most slender fashion,

And the palm of her hand in mine was cool as a cloud in summer.

And I placed the veil between us, and we held fast by the girdles,

And I recited the oath and sealed with a prayer our treaty.

And I cried aloud, “I am Abu Zeyd, he and no other,

Salameh, chief of Amer, the slayer of thy kindred.

For I slew Zohan, and Abu Tolh, and Fakhr, and Khodel,

Leaving their kith in pain with lovelocks shorn from their foreheads.

Mine is the arm of valour which made Helal victorious,

Mine the vow of succour to all in need distressful.”

And Alia heard me speak and stood up tall before me,

Like to one making a cry, but I shut her mouth with my hand’s palm.

And hot tears came to my eyes, and “Cry not,” I said, “O Alia,

Cry not for pity aloud, lest I fall in a sea of trouble.”

And she said, " My cry was unwilling, for thy love my whole heart filleth,

And now fear is forgot. And O, Abu Zeyd Salameh, Know that we twain must love, for I am of noble lineage, Even as thou thyself, the hero, the lion of Amer."

And I said, " Now listen, Alia, to that which I would tell thee :

Love is a building fair, broad based on sure foundations.

And the builders built it high as was no other dwelling."

And she said, " Thou speakest truth. And love is of three conditions,

And to men of understanding each hath a sign to know it.

The first compelleth thee to kiss the hand thou lovest.

This is a moment's love. The next is more enduring,

Which kisseth thee on the cheek. But there is yet the latest,

Love which shall kiss thy forehead. This is a love for ever.

Mine is of all the three. And for my soul's consoling,

Come thou to our camp." But I said to her, " O Alia,

In this thou art to blame. I dare not on such venture,

Being a seeker still of that which was my questing."

But she said, " The mare is mine. My own hand shall unloose her.

With me are her hobbles' keys, by night will I unlock them.

The keys lie in a goatskin, a goatskin filled with water,

And that deep in a well. There lieth our secret hidden.

And all are mine to deal with, goatskin and keys and hobbles.

Therefore do thou give ear—nay, be not thou despising.

For as the mare is mine, so am I thine to deal with.

Let us arise and go, thou, I, and the mare together,

Even to thine own tribe." But I, " My thought is elsewhere,

No more I seek the mare, nor is my mind to take her,

For have we not the Shohba, the grey mare of Ibn Ghanem ?

Her will I give in ransom for the mare of Agheyli Jaber.
Nay, for I fear for thee, lest evil should befall thee,
Through the tracking of the mare, thou daughter of the
great ones,
Evil and sore disgrace which all men should remember.”
But she said, “ No, of a truth. And, if thou spare to take
her
Then will I slay her straight. For how many more beside
her,
Stand not tied at our door, mares like to her in value ?
And for myself, alas, the poison cup stands ready,
And I will go with her to death’s unjoyful dwellings.”
And when I heard this word, need was that I consented.

Said the Narrator :

And when the Princess Alia and the Emir Abu Zeyd had finished talking in the manner told, and she perceived that his mind was truly on the mare, and that for her sake only he doubted, then answered she him thus and said, “ Behold, I will arrange this thing for thee, even if in its accomplishing my soul should pass away, for in truth the mare is precious to my father, more precious than am I his daughter.” And Abu Zeyd, hearing this, pondered a long while, even for an hour in silence. And she asked him, “ What aileth thee, O Helali Salameh ? ” And he said, “ If I should take the mare, of a surety thy father would question thee of her, and he would learn the truth, and maybe he would treat thee ill for her sake. And for this cause hath my mind changed that I will not take her. And there is verily the grey mare of Ibn Ghanem, the Shohba, and her we could put in her place.” But she said to him, “ Nay, that may not be, not though I should drink of the cup of bitterness. And, if thou dost not take her, surely will I slay the mare and my own self after her, and thou alone shalt be responsible to her Lord and to my

Lord. So come down now this very hour to the camp, and I will arrange all the matter." And he answered her, "Do thou go before, and I will follow after thee on the morrow." But she said, "Nay, but come thou now with me." And she desisted not until he came with her to the tents. And she made a place for him of honour on a rich carpet, and she herself ministered unto him, speaking him words of welcome. And she brought him the ewer, that he might wash and pray. And for this he praised God. And he needed sleep, so she said to him, "Sleep here in peace, for I am mindful of the covenant made before God between thee and me." And he slept. And this was after that he had eaten and drunk, and refreshed himself. And behold the dawn lightened. And Alia brought him water, and he prayed. And she brought him something of food, and he praised the Lord of all creatures. And she set him in the seat of honour, and she hung around him curtains of silk, and he slept. Then she left him and went to the Assembly.

And the Narrator once more singeth :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd, the Helali Salameh :
Of that which befell, O people in wait for information,
Hear and list to my words, "O Alia, daughter of Jaber,
Leave me here and go thy way to thy tribe and people.
Leave me here. With the rising sun shalt thou see me
coming."

But she, "O Abu Zeyd, thy life with mine is knitted.
Thy soul is as my soul. Be not for me in trouble."
And she set her hand on my neck, and held me and implored
me.

And I, for all I feared, went home with her unwilling.
And she led me within to a couch, a couch spread soft with
cushions,
Four-square with curtains round and netted thick with
jewels,

(A castle you had deemed it). And she said, "O thou Salameh,

Now hast thou made us glad, for see, the tribe rejoiceth.
To-day is white through thee, O prince, O lion of Amer."
And she brought the basin and ewer, and stood there in her beauty,

Shining, unveiled, her hair in plaits which hung to her girdle.

And I washed and prayed alone, as is ordered by the precept.

And anon she came again, and in her hand she brought me Somewhat that I might eat, meats fit for kings, in dishes.

And she said, "O Abu Zeyd, there is time if thou wouldst slumber.

And she spread a bed before me with her own hands for sleeping ;

And sprinkled it with musk, sweet-scenting all the chamber.

And she of the plaits returned, and yet again, with coverings,
Like a gazelle, I deemed, the wild fawn of the desert.

And her eyes ! May God be praised if thou shouldst gaze within them !

A bird as it flew might fall, from its midmost way beholding.

And on her cheek a dimple guarded near with roses.

And wrists and hands how soft ! Glory to Him in heaven,
Who fashioned thus her beauty, this daughter of the great ones.

At the break of dawn she came, her countenance all shining,

And she brought me the ewer filled, and I made my supplication,

And praised the Lord of Might, the Merciful, the Creator.

Said the Narrator :

And when the day broke and Abu Zeyd had made his prayer, and Alia had entered and bidden him good morrow, and had said, "Thou hast made us glad, O Abu Zeyd, with

thy presence," and he had answered her, "God bless thee," then came she to him with food and he ate, and he arose. And she set out the couches and put all in order, and commanded that the drums should be beaten to summon her young companions, and she said to them, "Rejoice with me, and prepare of all things in abundance, for a great happiness hath come to me and the extreme of favour." Then sat they all around her and made display of joy, and all care vanished. And when the damsels were complete in their number, then returned she to the Hejazi Salameh and said to him, "Come, take thy place with me in the Assembly of the daughters of the Arabs." But he said to her, "O Alia, my desire was that I should remain secret, and behold thou wouldst make all things known." But she : "What matter ? Fear nothing, for the souls of all of us are thine, and no harm shall befall thee, and we are a ransom for thee." So she brought him with her and set him on a throne of gold by her side. And, when the daughters of the Arabs saw that, they looked the one at the other and whispered among themselves. And the Emir Abu Zeyd wept aloud and lamented. And Alia perceived that he was weeping, and asked of him the cause. And he said, "It is by reason that they speak lightly of us." But she said to the damsels, "This great one hath saved me from an evil death, and ye do not well to laugh. And an honourable man is he, nor would he do aught worthy of blame." And at that, the minds of the young girls were set at rest, and they said to her, "Were we in thy place so would we also do." And Abu Zeyd was comforted, knowing that they would keep all things secret.

And the Narrator began to sing :

Saith the hero Abu Zeyd the Hejazi Salameh,
When I entered the camp and the tribe, and stood in their
midst the dwellers,

And the day dawned in the heaven, and my prayer had been repeated,

Then came Alia greeting and bade me a fair morning,
And I gave her back the salute, the noble daughter of Jaber.

And she said again, " Good morrow to thee, O Abu Mukheymer,

How hast thou done us honour, thou noble prince of the great ones ! "

And Alia sought the pavilion where the thrones were set in order,

Eighty towards the right and sixty thrones to the leftward,
And fifty more at the front with stuffs embossed with jewels,

For there had Alia placed them. And the drums of joy were beaten

That the Princes' daughters might hear and come forth at her bidding,

And forth anon came they with trailing robes of saffron,
And sat them on the thrones of Agheyli, the noble maidens.
And they asked, " What mean the drums, O thou our Prince's daughter ?

What meaneth thy rejoicing ? " And she, " Rejoice, O Damsels."

And Abu Zeyd the while lay close in the tent hidden.

And she bade the fair ones sit, the daughters of the great ones.

And she fetched a throne of gold inlaid with crusts of jewels,
And went to Abu Zeyd and bade him to the Assembly.

And he reproved her, saying, " Thou art a Prince's daughter ;
Have we not sworn an oath to keep this matter secret ?

And wilt thou blazon it round with these tongue-wagging damsels ?

A secret is for two, or four at the most, for keeping.

But what and where is it laid bare among a thousand ? "

And she bade him cease his doubt nor thus mistrust the damsels.

And she led me, and I went shamefaced and in amazement,
The damsels watching near and whispering to each other,
With their veils drawn to their faces. And Alia stood
before them,

And with her Abu Zeyd, and she bade me straight be seated.
And she sat down by my side, a wild roe from the desert.
And we seemed a bridal pair, on thrones of gold, new-wedded,

And we watched the sport and play, the festival of rejoicing.
And the damsels each at each looked and at us, in whispers
Asking, and half aloud, "Who then may be this stranger,
A prince? a noble born? a man of race and lineage?

Watch well his garments, ye, his bearing, his demeanour,
Surely he something hath of king-like in his gesture."

And one cried, "Hearken all, and I will read the riddle.
This is a holy man, one unacquainted with women,
Strange to the wearers of plaits." And another, "Nay, I
tell ye,

And let my word be heard, This Sheykh is of the great ones,
Else or a wise magician, whom Alia entertaineth
For some occult design—that, or a spy and prowler."

And Abu Zeyd was aware of these their words and guessings,
And his heart within him sank, and his head dropped, and
his tears flowed,

And Alia, when she saw him downcast, "How now, Salameh,
Art thou thus faint of heart?" she cried to her sad lover.
But he, "The thing hath come of which I feared, O Lady,
And these light-minded girls make speech of us for evil.

This is a Sheykh, saith one, and that, a spy, a prowler.
But know a sherif am I, my grandsire was Mohammed.
The truth it is, O Lady, I am of this proud lineage."

And she called to them, "Shame on ye, and shame on your
suspicions,

Ye daughters of my people, ye fair ones light of fancy.
List, I will tell ye all within my oath's prescription,
(Yet were a breaker of oaths but cast away to perish)
I am the Agheyli's daughter, the noble born, I Alia.
And whoso of ye all, ye fair ones, speaketh evil,
The same hath done me wrong. And which of ye, O
damsels,
Is of my high condition ? And which hath longer hair-
plaits,
Or is of darker eyes ? And when was I blameworthy ?
Where is my fault ? Nay, truly, were it but yours to keep it,
My oath should bind ye too. Speak rather in all plainness,
And I will hear ye out, for true words are a precept."
And they said, "Thy oath is binding. Thou doest well
to keep it,
And to betray were sin, ay, even the seal of perdition.
We are thy witness all, thy whole life hath been blameless,
A luminous life and fair, beseeeming thy high lineage :
Daughter of glorious sires, none might presume to blame thee.
Only we wondered somewhat to see thee with this stranger,
For thou treatest him as brother, and thee thyself as sister,
And we were astonished thereat, and our minds fell in
doubting,
And we talked and questioned still, and argued it together."
But she, "O damsels, hear me. Did ye but know his
merit,
Ye would sell all to possess him, he being of the great ones,
A prince of noble lineage, a mighty man of valour ;
This is he, the renowned, who made Helal victorious,
Abu Zeyd Salameh, the Hejazi, and none other."
And they answered, "Fear thou nought. We will keep
close thy secret,
For that which thou hast done we too had surely done it.
We will be to thee in this to the end of thy heart's wishes,
And to him too, to the end. No ear shall learn it of us."

V

Said the Narrator :

And when the maidens and Alia had made an end of their talking, and they had said to her, " Fear not, we are with thee, and of nothing of our souls will we be niggardly for thy sake, and all that thou hast done that too would we have done ; and one such as is this knight were more worthy our possessing than all else in the world, for he is without guile and without blemish ;—then Alia, hearing this, her heart was quieted, and she arose full of joy, and bent down and kissed the hands of Abu Zeyd. And all the damsels in like manner kissed his hands. And they undid their veils before him to the right and to the left. And Alia bade them bring meats in dishes, and the damsels brought them. And the servants and they rejoiced and were glad together. And when their meal was ended they brought wine and drank of it, and made merry until night fell on them. And they sang psalms and canticles, and played on instruments of music, nor did they leave their merriment for twenty nights, so that Abu Zeyd forgot his people, and it was to him as to one who had been born among them, nor cared he for aught that should happen in the land of Helal. But on the twenty and first night he remembered where he was, and how he had come thither, and the story of the ancient dame who had sought him and the pledge he had given her to obtain for her that which she desired. And tears came to his eyes and flowed down upon his beard. And when Alia saw this she arose and asked him why he wept. And he said, " I have been remembering my people, and those that are dear to me afar and the business that I came on." And she said, " Wait only till it be dark." And he waited until the night came. And she arose and fetched the keys and delivered to him the mare. And she brought him change of raiment and a skin of dates and butter and bread. And

she said, "Take me also with thee with the mare, and leave me not to suffer blame." And she clung to his stirrup. But he swore an oath to her that he would return and protect her from her father. And she let go the stirrup. And in that guise he left her, and they were both weeping. And Alia turned from him with weeping eyes, and lamented grievously at their parting. And he went his way through the desert, while she remained in her sorrow. And she sat upon the ground with the daughters of the great ones, and they burst forth all in lamentations and tears.

Then singeth again the Narrator :

Saith she, the Princess Alia (and the tears flowed from her eyelids),

"Ho, ye daughters fair of my tribe, to my words give heeding.

Be ye my secret's keepers. This one by his fair actions
Hath earned the better part, ay, praises everlasting.

Let every creature praise him, and God him keep, the
Creator."

And they said, "We hear and obey, a thousand times
obedient.

Our souls shall thy ransom be to hold our lips close-guarded."
And Alia went to him, and his right hand and his left hand
Kissed she, and they too all, while the dark one stood
astonished.

And they said, "May God reward thee with good and grace
and blessing.

Oh thou Emir Salameh, champion among the great ones."

And they called to Alia loudly, "Lady, thou daughter of
Jaber,

Bid that the meats be spread, and feast we with this
stranger."

And they brought the fruits and the meats, and the dishes
meet for Princes.

And when the meal was done then poured they fair potations,
Drinking in jewelled cups with skilled musicians and
singers,

(Where should the like be found ?) for they sang in such
sweet measure

That, if a bird had heard, it had stooped from its way in
heaven.

In figure and trope they sang, of four-and-twenty stanzas.
And Alia chose eight players, the cunningest among them,
Four for the lute and viol, and four for hymns and chaunt-
ings.

Each sat him down and played, and they sang with pleasant
voices.

Thus twenty nights went by as a single hour in swiftness.

And it seemed to me my life had been ever thus from its
outset,

Till I forgot Helal, even Helal Ibn Amer.

Then suddenly the thought came to me of my people,
My tribe and my high place, my friends and war companions,
And tears ran down my face : I did not seek to stay them,
But sat as a man crazed. And Alia, when she saw me,
“ What aileth thee, Abu Zeyd, and what may be thy
trouble ? ”

And I said, “ O Alia, see me how I thus late remember
My glory and my tribe, and friends, and war-companions ;
See, I have lingered here these twenty nights in number
In this thy stranger tribe. And how then shall I end it ?
Arise and bring the mare, and see that thou delay not,
If thou be one of trust.” And she, “ I will surely bring her,
And may the merciful God, O Prince, make smooth thy
journey.

For truly saith Ibn Arus, ‘ The dark night brought the
prowler.’ ”

And I said, “ I hear and obey,” yet ceased not to be troubled
Until the night should come. But near the hour of sunset

Alia arose and said, "It is time." Then like a lion
Rose I, and roared, "I hear and obey, thou daughter of
Jaber."

And Alia threw off her jewels, and she went out and I
followed

With a loud-beating heart to the space beyond the tent
ropes,

And we walked in the space apart 'twixt Alia's and the
mare's tent.

And she held my hand as I went, like a lioness, I like a lion.
And when we had come to that other tent, then she gazelle-
like

Stepping passed to the well, and into its depths went
Alia.

And presently came again with a goatskin filled with water.
And she took from it the keys, and she opened wide the
stable,

For the night was dark, and within we heard the mare's
feet stamping,

Yet stayed she at the sound of her step, the Agheyli's
daughter.

And Alia stooped and loosed from the mare her fetters of
iron.

And I led her forth in joy, the mare, nor hid my pleasure.

And she brought the saddle in haste, and bound it fast with
its girthing,

And she hung to it a nosebag as ready for a journey.

And I with my hand the while set on her head the bridle.

And she stood at the mare's near side, and close behind the
saddle.

And she said, "Yet leave the cords, lest they be thy
undoing."

And I left them on the ground, cords of the red silk twisted.

And she came beside me near, and held me by the fingers,

And said, "O Abu Zeyd, give ear to me and hearken."

And she brought me all of the best, and a fair change of
raiment,

Garments rare of glory, rejoicing the beholders.

And she said, "O Abu Zeyd, leave here thy ancient
garments,

And put on these, the new, O thou illustrious hero."

And I named the name of God, and I put on the raiment.

And clothed I stood as a King, even as one of the Sultans.

And she brought me too the armour of the Emir Zohaneh,

And a sword from the land of Yemen, its blade was sharp
and shining,

And girt it to my left side. And I loosed it from its fastening,

And drew the blade from its sheath, and stood like the King
of Terrors.

And I went to the grey mare's side, and took her rein in
silence,

While Alia wept aloud and her tears ran down in streamlets.

And I named the name of God and sprang into the saddle,

And touched the mare with my heel. But Alia still delaying

Put in my hand a spear (its point would split a pebble,

And it shone in the night like a star) and I bore it on my
shoulder,

And my heart leapt high with valour, and I longed to meet
the tribesmen

And charge them one and all, alone, I without helper.

And fain was I they should wake that I might give them
battle,

And drive them with my sword, their mightiest men of
valour.

And she brought me dates in a skin, and made me all
provision.

And thus was I. And she, still clinging to my stirrup,

Cried, "Let me go with thee, astride the mare, behind thee.

Let me be with thee still while he my father liveth."

But I said, "Nay, yet I swear thou shalt not be forsaken,

Nor will I seek Helal till first I come back for thee,
Having devised a plan." Then drew I away my stirrup,
And the tears ran down my face, and my heart was grieved
within me.

And I went forth on my way and heard her still lamenting,
Even as I rode afar. For she cried on, "O Salameh,
Haste thee back, for thy going is as a fire that burneth."
And she turned to the pavilion, and sat down on the carpet,
The carpet of amber silk. And, "Where is he, Salameh?"
She cried to the pavilion. "If he come not back to seek me,
Lo, will I burn thy hangings and tear the hair thy covering.
If he cometh not, Salameh, a tomb shall be my dwelling.
And yet the time shall be we shall both meet together:
For this be praise to God the Lord God the Almighty.
And I ask my pardon of God for all sins and transgressions,
Him who is my protector in the high Heaven of Heavens."

VI

Said the Narrator :

And when the Emir Abu Zeyd had departed with the mare, and had taken his leave of the Princess Alia, and had passed into the outer pastures, then remained the Princess a long while weeping at his going, and in doubt how she should meet her people, and in fear of what might come to her through the stealing of the mare. And she returned to her tent, and threw herself upon her bed, weeping with both eyes. This for her. But as to the Emir Abu Zeyd, he too fell adoubting as he rode; and he said, "If I go back now to the Arabs, mine own people, and to my business, nor take thought of Alia, it will certainly happen that our doings will be made known, and her father will slay her; and, on the other hand, if I should return to her, it will be a matter of long duration, and I shall be a great while withheld from my people and my affairs. Now, therefore, it were better I

should go see that which is happening among them." And he stopped at a fountain of water, and he drank of it, and he gave his mare to drink. And he sat him down to think over all his plan, and he remembered the day of judgment, and the oath that he had taken to Alia that he would return to her before going to his own people. And this is what happened in the case of the Emir Abu Zeyd.

And at this point the Narrator began once more to sing, and it was in the following verses :

So did my thought return to the Helali Salameh,
When he took with him the mare, and set him to do his
purpose,
With all that him befell, O men, among the great ones.
The grooms of the mare went in to the grey mare to groom
her,

Entered within her tent, and found a lantern burning,
Yet found they not the mare, nor token of her presence.
And they fell in consternation, O people, and much doubting.
And they cried, " Alack-a-day ! To our help, O men, O
warriors !

The grey mare of the King is not. Ho, ye of courage,
Go with the news straightway. Tell the Agheyli Jaber."
And a tumult vast arose in all the neighbouring camp-fires.
And the Emir Fadel came, confused with the much shout-
ing ;

And he called to them aloud, " O warriors, wherefore shout ye,
Casting the camps in fear, as though the foe were on ye ? "
And they brought him a kassás, a cunning man, a tracker,
One learned in all signs, that he might search the desert.
And lo the footsteps ended at the tent of Alia.
Then were there wondering looks among the camel riders,
And a thousand horsemen rode, Fulano and Fulano,
Every name of worth, a gallant band of fighters.
And the hero Abu Zeyd lifted his eyes, and saw them,

Like locusts on the plain. And he tightened his mare's
girthing,

And called aloud to all, "Come on, if ye have courage."

And they gathered near and near, and the dust of their hard
riders

Rose like a cloud to heaven. And presently they saw him,
And he could see their eyes, and the flashing of their spear-
points.

And the foemen called aloud, "O thou of the race of Himyar,
Thou shalt not flee our wrath, not though thy back grew
pinions.

For he thy sire of old came thus. And thou, what wouldst
thou?"

And to them Abu Zeyd, "My right lies in my spear-point.

Wait rather, all of ye, that I may prove your boasting."

And I charged, said Abu Zeyd, and lo I was among them.

And the din of battle rose, and the clanking of the sword-
blades,

And I could not count their numbers spread on the plain
like locusts.

Roaring they came on me with the loud voice of lions.

You had said a cloud in heaven struck by the bolts of
thunder.

And to my soul I said, "O thou Helali Salameh,

To fly were shame on thee. Nay rather fear thou Alia,

Lest she should send for news how thy back turned in
battle."

And I saw my death by the spear as the best of doubtful
issues.

"Death is better than talk," I said, "the words of the idle,
Ay, than the words of disgrace. So go I to destruction,

Nay, though I win to my tomb in the day of evil fortune."

And I turned my mare and sprang, like a lion in the seizing,

And I pressed her flank with my heel and sent her flying
forward,

And I charged home on their ranks, nor thought of wound
nor danger.

And I smote them with my sword till the air shone with
smiting.

And I met them once and twice with stark blows homeward
driven.

And they pressed me left and right as the high banks of a
river,

Even the River Nile in the full day of its flooding,
When the whirlpools sweep with might and overwhelm the
bridges.

Twenty foes and five fell down before me smitten,
Nor cared I them to slay, being of Alia's kindred,
But tumbled them on the ground with sharp taste of my
spear-point.

And they turned back in confusion, each man to his own
dwelling,

While I pursued them still as the King Death pursueth.
And I pricked them with my spear from the first third to the
latest.

And they stopped, and charged, and rallied the while I
pressed and smote them.

And I saw again their eyes, and again they pressed me
sorely,

Till I put my care on the Lord, the Lord God the Creator,
And all my load on him, the Prophet, the Muhajer.

And I feared—they were so many—lest they should take or
slay me,

Yet trusted I the Lord, who is a Lord of mercy.

But about the hour of the Doha there came at me a horse-
man,

And he cried out, "I am he, the son of Agheyli Jaber,
Suliman men me call, the bravest of the bravest."

And he shouted to me, "O slave, is it thou, thou thief of
horseflesh ?

Thou who smitest our people, and makest naught of our great ones ?

Show us here thy courage. Get thee to the fight, thou dark one."

And I charged on him like a lion, a lion roused to the seizing, And before my wrath he fled, nor found I one to withstand me. Nor stayed he of his running till at the tents of the women, Even the tent of Alia, hers with the plaited tresses.

And I pressed him close behind, and drove him to the tent ropes,

And Alia came out, crying, " May the great God thee succour, Even as He succoured Him who fled to the noble city.

Fight thou on in all heart, nor fear the sons of the Arabs, O thou worthy of praise, for these Agheylat are boasters. Fight with the whole of Agheyl, O thou redoubtable hero." And when they heard her words, the horsemen stayed in their running,

And seemed to take new thought in council with their great ones,

And at her railings stopped and looked at one another ; And each to the other said, " She knoweth, then, this champion.

Hers is the fault of the mare, the grey mare of our chieftain, Hers the treachery is. What further need we trouble, Spending ourselves in vain, with treachery behind us ? Rather return we straight, and tell the Agheyli Jaber Of the goings on in the camp, and that which was in his dwelling."

And they turned to the Emir Fadel, the high Prince, the Agheyli.

And he asked them, " Saw ye aught of the enemy of our people ? "

And they said, " Ay, saw we him thine own grey mare bestriding,

And he turned on us as a lion, a lion roused to the seizing,

Dark-hued, beautiful-faced, and noble in his anger.
And he drew his blade on us all, as it were the flash of the lightning.

Many were we, he one, nor was there any beside him.
Much we wondered to see him thus, O worthy of honour !
One alone he fought with us all, nor had he a helper.
And he drove us back from the field, our horse and camel riders,

He on the mare thou knowest, and following close behind us.
Thus we came to the camp, we first, and then the stragglers,
All of us fighting the hero, and no man looked to his fellow.
And so till the sun was high and the day rose to the Doha.
Then came thy son to our help, and he too fled from the fierce one,

Fled with a doubting heart, sore struck, to the tent of Alia.
And Alia, seeing this thing, came forth beyond the tent ropes,

And called aloud to the foe, and prayed for his more glory.
And little account made she of the trouble of her people.
Yet succoured she thy son. Though he, the adversary,
Is all the thing of her care, nor careth she for another.
And when this case stood clear, then said we each to other,
' Alia the stranger knoweth, the grey mare she hath given.
Hers the treachery is, thy daughter's, Agheyli Jaber.'
Therefore left we the foe, and came we here before thee.
Laying thee bare our case. And this is our tale and story.
And what hath been to the mare is clear to all the people."

VII

Said the Narrator :

And when the Agheyli Jaber heard this talk he was overcome with trouble, and it seemed as though his understanding had flown from him and his senses. And he said, " Bring Alia before me." And they made haste and went to

her, and bade her, "Go, for thy father calleth thee." And she obeyed, and went with them before her father. And he said, "O wicked one, what is this that I learn of thee and thy deceits, and that thou art the reason of the loss of our mare, and that thou didst call down a blessing of victory on our foeman when he had wounded thy brother Sulyman, and that thou gavest him in ransom and all our people for that other?" And she said to him, "Yea verily, for I know this enemy, and it is I that gave to him the mare; and wert thou acquainted with his worth, thou wouldst surely give him (and it would be a pleasure to thee) all thy wealth and thy possessions and everything that thou hast." But when he heard these words of her, the matter appeared to him still more of moment. And he called on those near him to bind the girl by the shoulders, and to bring wood and lighted coals to burn her withal, that she might presently taste of the cup of death. And at his word they fell upon her, and bound her; and they kindled a fire, and brought her to it, and it remained only that they should cast her thereon. And Alia beheld this that was prepared for her, and her heart fainted with fear.

This, then, is what happened to Alia, and between her and her father. And the Narrator once more singeth:

Lament the men of Agheyl, the men of Helal ibn Amer:
Lo, there is nought of good in the world, and nought of
 pleasure,
If that children deceive their sires, and be of the wicked.
And, as they talked, behold a wise man spoke to Fadel:
"Lo, the thing thy daughter hath done is known to the
 people,
Yet is the cause of it hid. Now therefore send for thy
 daughter,
That thou mayest know thy foeman. Let her his name
 discover,

Since that she knoweth him thus, and thou shalt find assuagement."

And Fadel heard him speak, and all his wrath was kindled, And his mind was shaken sore, and his soul set in confusion. Yet sent he forth for Alia, and bade her appear before him. And they brought the girl to his tent, and she came to the Assembly.

And he said, "What dost thou, my daughter, and what are these thy dealings, That thou betrayest thy tribe? Thou art a shame to the Arabs.

They say thou knowest this man, this enemy of thy people, Ay, and didst give him the mare. Thus speak of thee the great ones."

And she answered, "Yes and yes. I know him, the adversary,

And gave him, too, the mare; nor do I seek to deny it."

And Fadel's wrath grew hot, for now her guilt was proven. And he bade them bind her fast, and bring the wood for the kindling.

And even so did they. And they bound her right and her left hand,

And they heaped the wood, O people, even in their hour of anger,

And they set a spark to the heap, even in the midst of the desert.

And Alia's eyes beheld, yet bore she her fear in patience, Nor spoke she any word, nor gave reins to her terror.

Said the Narrator:

And when they had lit the fire, while Alia watched the kindling, behold, her fear was great, and her eyes looked to the right and to the left hand, because that Abu Zeyd had promised her that he would return to the camp; and while she was in this wise, suddenly she saw Abu Zeyd

standing in the midst of the Arabs who were around her. And he was in disguise as a dervish, or one of those who ask alms. And he saw that she was about to speak. But he signed to her that she should be silent : as it were he would say, " Fear not, for I am here." And when she was sure that it was indeed he Abu Zeyd and none other, then smiled she on him very sweetly, and said, " Thine be the victory, and I will be thy ransom. Nor shall thy enemies prevail against thee." But he answered with a sign, " Of a surety thou shalt see somewhat that shall astonish thee." And this he said as the flames of the fire broke forth.

Now the cause of the coming of Abu Zeyd to the place was in this wise. After that he had gone away, and had taken with him the mare, and that his mind had entered into its perplexity as to what might befall Alia from her father, lest he should seize on her and inquire what had happened, and why she had cared nothing for her own people or for her wounded brother, and why she had cried to Abu Zeyd, then said he to himself, " Of a surety I must return to her, and ascertain the event." And looking about him, he made discovery of a cave known as yet to no man, and he placed in it the mare, and gathered grass for her, and closed the door of the cave with stones. Then clothing himself as a dervish, he made his plan how he should return to the tents of Agheyl. And forthwith he found Alia in the straits already told, and he made his thought known to her by signs, and by signs she gave him to understand her answers.

And at this point the Narrator began again to sing, and it was in the following verses :

So returneth my tale to the Hejazi Salameh,
The hero Abu Zeyd, bearer of all men's burthens.
When that these had returned, the foemen from their
fighting,
And she of the jewels had called aloud on his head a blessing,

Then came back the hero Salameh, he grieving for Alia,
Much in pain came he, and pondering his black fortune.
And to himself he said, "O thou, Hejazi Salameh,
Wilt thou return to thy people, or wilt thou return to Alia?
I have reckoned the hour of judgment, and made account of
its terrors,
When all is meted to men, the good with the evil dealing."
And I counsel took with myself how I should turn me
towards her,
And learn the truth of her way, and how it sped with her
fortune.
And I feared lest evil men should stir the anger of Fadel,
And pain should be her lot, and grief in the day of evil.
Yet was my mind distraught for the mare, how I might
dispose her,
Till of a secret cave I thought, deep dug in the mountains,
And there I placed her close, and grass I brought her and
water,
And gathered stones from the hill, and sealed the cavern
with boulders,
Troubled in mind, O people, and left her there and
departed
Uttering verses of power to hide it from eyes curious.
And thus I eased my grief, and soothed my soul in its
anguish.
And I passed on foot through the waste by the ways my
steps had trodden.
And I sat alone with myself in the empty breadth of the
desert,
And I took from my back my wallet, and shook the dust from
its leather,
And loosed the buttons all, and searched its inner recesses,
And took from it a dress should serve me for disguisement,
Unguents and oil of salghan, and red beans and essalkam,
And I roasted them on the fire till they were ripe and ruddy.

And I whitened my beard with chalk, and pulled down my mustachios,

And dyed my face with saffron till my cheeks glowed like apples ;

And I wrinkled the skin of my brows and crooked my back like a bent bow,

And leaned upon my staff. For am I not, O people,

A man of infinite wiles, a cunning man, a deceiver ?

And over the rest of my clothes I set the garb of a dervish,

And held a pot in my hand, even of the pots of the beggars.

And thus in my disguisement I sought his tents, the Agheyli, Troubled still in my heart for Alia and her trouble,

Nor ceased I to walk and run till I came to the tents of Jaber,

And found there Alia bound, with wood made red for the kindling.

And she cried, " Alack-a-day ! for the men of evil dealing.

Call I to God above, the God of power and compassion,

Him whom no eye may see, to hasten back the dark one.

Ho, in what place are thy eyes, thou foolish man, Salameh,

That thou comest not to her help from these which stand around her ?

Why dost thou leave her to these, the insolent men of evil ?

What didst thou say, O Abu Zeyd, when forth thou wentest ?

Or was thy talk a deceit to her, O Abu Mukheymer ?

Wert thou false and untrue, O beautiful one, O hero ?

If that thy speech were truth, then come thou to her succour."

And I called to her with a sign, " Nay, be not wrath in thy anger ;

Only the foolish are wrath." And she answered with a gesture,

" Victory be to thee, O Prince, and a life of glory ;

Mayest thou still of thy foes the snares outwit, the deceptions.

Lo, my soul is a ransom for thine, and love I this anguish

So but I know thee true, and minded not to betrayal.”
And I called to her with a sign, for we needed not more language :

“ Traitors and evil men shall have their payment of evil. Fear not, for I am here, and, not though the fire be kindled, Be thou disturbed in mind, for lo, I stand at thy right hand ; And when the flames shall rise, then look for thy deliverance.”

Thus did I comfort her grief. “ God make thee,” she said, “ victorious.”

Said the Narrator :

And when Alia perceived the Emir Abu Zeyd, and when he had made himself known to her, and they had spoken each by signs to the other, so that her heart was quieted, and her mind lightened of its fear, then Abu Zeyd left her, and went on further a short space, until he came to where a holy man stood up in prayer. And he stood up with him, and made his recitation, until the Assembly was at an end. And the fire was ready kindled, and they brought Alia towards it, and they were about to place her thereon, when the Emir Abu Zeyd came near to Alia, and set aside the people who were pressing round her, and stooped down towards the fire, and having called in a loud voice upon the Prophet, he beat out the fire until it was extinguished. Then went he back to Alia and loosened her bonds, the people the while standing silent in wonder at his doing. And presently they went to the Emir Fadel and told him of what had been. And the Emir said, “ Let him even do as he is minded and as it pleaseth him, for it is not meet I should set myself against any doing whatsoever of an holy man. And for the holy man’s sake will I grant Alia her forgiveness. And tell her to return to her own place. But for myself need is that I go forward to greet him.” And the Emir Fadel arose quickly and approached the

fakir, and he kissed his hand and said to him, "O my Lord, there hath befallen me a great and redoubtable ill-fortune. Make thou thy prayer for me to our Lord that He give me back my mare; for is He not the giver? And, if that thou shouldst desire to remain with us, surely there shall be to thee a fair welcome; and, shouldst thou die in this country, be assured we will make to thee a fair sepulchre whither at all hours will we come both of the night and of the day." And when Abu Zeyd heard him say this he answered him, "Of a surety this matter shall be made clear to thee and thou shalt know the truth and behold it with thine own eyes." Then the Emir Fadel took the fakir with him, and he made Abu Zeyd to sit in the seat of honour; nor said he aught further nor spoke more of that which had happened on the yesterday nor of the matter of the mare.

And the Narrator began again to sing in the following verses; and he said:

Now doth my tale return to the hero Hejazi Salameh:
When that Abu Zeyd had seen the sorrow of Alia,
And had said, "O Alia, trust me, trust me and be thou
patient,
Swift will I bring thee succour in the sight of all beholders,"
Then went I for a space to the place of recitation,
The place of fakirs in prayer, of holy men who were
chaunting.
And I found a man of God in his prayer, O people,
enraptured,
And around him many more who prayed in the Assembly.
And I said to myself, "O Abu Zeyd Hejazi Salameh,
Go thou down unto these, so shalt thou win a blessing."
And I went down to the throng and joined in the re-
citings,
And stood as one of themselves, as one of those that are holy,

I who had stolen the mare, even I to chaunt among them,
And all the while my heart was as iron heated for Alia,
While we recited aloud from the most noble Koran.
And when we had prayed we returned. And the princess
was in danger,
For the people had led her forth to where the fire was
enkindled,
And right and left she looked if any should come with
succour.
Then sprang I to her side like a lion roused in his anger,
And I took her by the hand, while the crowd beheld in
wonder.
And I thrust them back with my hands and stood beside
the burning,
Committing my cause to Him, the Lord God, the Almighty,
And I cried out, "Burn me not, O fire, nor seek thou to
shame me !
Burn not, O noble fire, nor do thou hurt to my garments,
For if thou work me ill, I bear to the Lord my witness,
I who am nobly born, a man of illustrious lineage."
And I passed out thus through the fire, and by the Lord's
permission
The flames died and fell down, and I walked forth from
them scathless.
And I came to the side of Alia, of her with the plaited
tresses,
And I undid her bonds while all the world beheld us :
And they said, " He is a Sheykh, a holy man of wonder."
And I said to Alia, " See, in what plight do I find thee !
I have returned to thee who gavest me my asking.
And lo, the flames of fire beneath thy feet extinguished.
And my heart is sore for thee, and dazed my understanding :
Fearful am I for thee for sake of these thy kinsmen ;
For thee would I destroy them with the sword's edge for
ever."

But when the people saw, as all men saw, my doings,
Then came they to my side and kissed they my five
fingers,

And they said, "O holy Sheykh, do thou procure a
blessing."

And I undid Alia's bonds while all the world beheld us.

Then quickly sent they forth to the Emir Agheyli Jaber,

And they said, "There hath come to us a holy man, a
Wely,

Long bearded, untrimmed he, one rapt in contemplation,
He hath quenched the flames of fire and made an end of
the burning,

Loosening Alia's bonds, her's of the many jewels."

And he told them, "Let him be, I have no mind to oppose
him,

Being of the fakirs." And he the Sheykh came to me

Barefooted, with respect, and shoeless kissed my fingers.

And he bade me welcome, nobly, even to eighty welcomes.

And he said, "I guess thy worth, and I will do thee honour ;

My heart is with the fakirs, I seek them night and morning,

And I would pardon Alia were it to do thee pleasure.

Yet see, one grief is mine, one all-consuming sorrow,

O Sheykh, 'tis she, my mare, the fair mare which I rode on ;

Glorious she was to see, the envy of beholders,

Light-footed—she is gone—you might say a bird's in its
flying.

Yet are her footsteps known to thee, thou master of
wisdom."

And Abu Zeyd made answer, "In the day of hasty judg-
ment

The eyes of men are blind ; wait rather till the morrow,

So shall the truth be seen, and thou rejoice, O Jaber."

And he said to him, "O Sheykh, if thou wilt do me pleasure,

Lodge with me here to-night, and wouldst thou tarry
longer

A dweller in our land, behold each night and morning
To thee shall be of the best the meat that thou desirest,
Garments of amber silk (and all good things in order),
And if that Death should thee o'ertake within our dwelling,
Lo, I will build for thee a monument of honour,
And yearly make for thee a feast and celebration,
And brave men at thy tomb shall keep thee in remembrance."

And the Emir Agheyli Jaber took by the hand Salameh,
And brought him to his tent and set him with the great ones.

And the people pressed around as it were in the market of Amer,

And with them the fakir, until the dawn was breaking,
While still they chaunted on, and thus to the full morning,
With song and recitation and noble wealth of feasting.

Said the Narrator :

And when they had made the morning prayer, talking and reciting, and Abu Zeyd with them in great delight, then to them came a swift horseman, and his name was Bedr ibn Saleh er Ramal, the sand-diviner, and he came from the land of Bagdad, a knower of things hidden. And when he had alighted he sat him down with the Arabs, and the Agheyli Jaber saluted him with a fair salutation, and the man said, " O Prince of the people, the news hath reached me of the loss of thy mare, nor have I come to thee save for her sake and to discourse to thee of her welfare if thou shouldst desire it." And the Emir said to him, " If thine be an honest business, the time favoureth." And the Ramal struck the sand and made on it his figure fairly, and he said, " Know that he who stole the mare hath set her in a desert place, and he then came back to thee, and is now with thee beholding all thou doest, and hearing all thou sayest." But Fadel el Agheyli said to him, " There

be no strangers here save only this Sheykh and thee, thou man of contemplation." Then the Emir Abu Zeyd went to the diviner and he said, "Know that the sand is at all times forbidden, as is spoken by the Prophet, even though the diviners should speak sooth, 'take them as liars.' If, therefore, thou hast other knowledge than by the sand make it known to all here." And the diviner said, "Nay, that should be for thee rather." And he commanded that they should bring him a stone vessel, and wine, and oil, and honey and milk, and roasted flesh, a little of each. And they brought him all that he desired. Then he took from his wallet an image of gold with names inscribed thereon, and the names were names of wonder, and the image was in the form of a son of Adam. And he placed the image in the vessel and poured on it the wine and the oil, and the honey and the milk, and all those things of which we have spoken, and he made invocations with incense, and a smoke rose. And there came to him of the Jinns crowding around him. And the image began to speak to and salute the Arabs, and tell them the story which had been told by the sand. And he said, "Know that none other hath taken the mare, save only he who is called Abu Zeyd Helali Salameh, and he is with you in this place." And upon this the Emir sought through all the crowd, but found no man a stranger there save only Abu Zeyd and the man of contemplation. And upon this the Emir Fadel shouted to the tribesmen, and bade them "Seize hold of the two, and put them in fetters and take them to Alia, who may haply recognise the wrongdoer, and give us news of the truth of the matter." And they did all that he bade them, and they went into the presence of Alia, and showed to her Abu Zeyd. And when she saw the Emir Abu Zeyd, she made shift to speak to him by signs. And she said, "If thou hadst obeyed me and gotten thee hence home, it had been better for thee than

now." But he said, "Fear not, for thou shalt see that of me which shall astonish thee." And he began to recite, and rejoicing quoted verses from the book, and leaping strenuously upward burst the chains that bound him, and it seemed as though he were light as the cotton-seed which floateth in the air. And he took the chains in his hands, and broke them to pieces from his neck and wrists and ankles. And when the tribesmen saw this they went to the Emir Fadel and told him all that had happened. And he said to them, "Not for my own pleasure did I this thing, but being over-persuaded by the diviner. Bring therefore the Sheykh to me that I may beg pardon of him, but take ye the diviner, and place him in his stead in irons. And burn him with fire, and be careful that ye leave him not alive."

Said the Narrator :

And upon this they obeyed and went to Bedr ibn Saleh that they might bind him. But he said to them : "O warriors, have patience until the Sheykh shall be here, and I will then show you the mare and the reason of all. And if I show you not the mare then do with me as ye list." And they consented to his wish. Then brought they to him the Emir Abu Zeyd, and they said to Bedr, "Now is the time for thee to perform thy word, and let us see how thou wilt fare in the business." And he answered them : "I hear and obey." Then again he took forth the image, and he began to inquire of it what should be.

And the Narrator once more singeth :

Now doth my song return to the Emir Agheyli Fadel,
The while he sat with his tribe at the forenoon hour, the
Doha,
And around him stood his people, his mighty men of
valour.

In pleasant talk sat they, and brave discourse of heroes,
Until one came to the camp Bedr ibn Saleh the cunning,
Skilled in the sand, a man of power and favoured of fortune,
Bred in youth at Bagdad, his father slain by the spear-
points,

Even the spears of Nathahir, and he an orphan among
them.

And when the tribesmen saw him, "Good luck," said they,
"attendeth."

And they cried "Salaam aleyk, O Bedr, searcher of secrets."
And Fadel too saluted, even the Emir Agheyli.

And he said, "I have come, O Sultan, in doubt of the grey
mare's fortune,

Therefore I came from afar, from the lands of the sun's
rising,

Seeking to serve thy need though I journeyed west to the
ocean,

Or, if she eastwards be, to the furthest tribes of the Orient."

And Fadel answered fairly, "Thou cheerest me with thy
coming,

And this one too saith sooth, being a searcher of secrets,
For he told me yesternight of thy coming and thy fortune,
And the news that thou wouldst bring." And to Abu
Zeyd Salameh

He said, "Thou speakest sooth, for lo, this sand-diviner
The like to him is not for the sand's signs and fortunes."

And Fadel called to Bedr, "Behold me and my trouble.

I will reward thee well." And he said, "I hear in obedi-
ence."

Then drew he of the grey mare a horoscope and figure,
And he saw within the lines a semblance in reversal.

"An archer leadeth the mare, in the black night doth he
hide her,

Guised as a holy man, a man of contemplation,

And he is here with you and the name of him Salameh,

Hidden among you all, to Agheyl a threat and a danger.”
And he turned to Abu Zeyd, “O Sheykh, give ear and
hearken.”

And Abu Zeyd took up the word and gave God praises :
“The sand is sand,” said he, “but further hast thou
nothing ?

If thou hast ought beside leave it no longer hidden.”
But when the diviner heard this word, his ire was kindled :
“The sand,” he said, “O Prince, hath spoken all things
truly,

It hath made known the sooth and shown the grey mare’s
robber ;

Behold he sitteth here, one of the crowd around thee,
And the mare’s self in a cave close shut behind thee lieth.
This is a certain truth. Praise be to God the knower.
Yet shall it plainer speak, so thou, O son of the great ones,
Give but the word they bring stone jars with wine and
honey,

All that thou canst procure, with milk and meat and
butter.”

And they brought him all he desired, and he took from his
bag an image,

An image made of gold, with talismans and figures,
Made in the likeness of man, with legs and arms and
shoulders,

And on its hand a ring, a seal-ring set with jewels.
And he made the image stand in the vessel, and poured
upon it

Of wine and milk and honey, regarding it intently.
And he covered it with a lid, and set coals in a censer,
And threw thereon of incense and fragrant wood and rosin,
And spake words of enchantment, and called as if en-
treating.

And there came to him the Red One with a sound of broken
thunder,

Jarish, king of the Jinns, encompassed with his whirlwind,
And the Princes of the Jinns in their cohorts and their
legions.

And a cry rose from the jar, and the image moved within it.
And the Arabs beheld these things. And he breathed
above the image,

And made signs with a wand. And he called aloud to the
image,

Saying, "O image, hear me, and sooth be in thy sayings.
Who was it robbed the mare and rode her forth in the
night time ?

Nay, if thou tell me not, I will cast thee to the people."

And the image moved in the jar and rose aloft in the vessel,
And called aloud to the crowd, "To all men salutation,
And salutation to him, Ibn Saleh, the obedient,
Him who hath sworn by the Name the Compeller of all
secrets.

And salutation to Fadel, the prince of Agheyl, the chieftain.
Hearken to me, ye great ones. Give ear to me, O Fadel.
Strange is the tale of thy mare (ay, write it in thy ledgers),
For he who robbed her from thee is with thee here in
Council."

And when the Emir had heard, then turned he rightwards
and leftwards,

Looking around in his pride like a pawn made queen on a
chess-board,

Yet saw he none but the Sheykh and the man of contem-
plation.

They alone, these two, stood strange among the tribesmen.
And he called aloud to the Arabs, and bade them bind
them in irons,

And lead them straight to Alia, to her of the plaited tresses.
"For she," he said, "shall know and tell us of our foeman."
And they took and bound Salameh and the man of con-
templation,

And they ringed their necks with iron and brought them
bound to Alia,

Crying aloud, "Behold the offenders of the great ones."

And Alia rose and came, and straightway saw Salameh,

And her spirit fell in trouble, and she wept at what had
fallen.

And she let him know by signs known only to the dark
one :

"Have I not wished thee good, and victory o'er my tribes-
men,

When that we sat by the fire? Why didst thou not
obey me

When I bade thee straight begone? For lo, the grief, the
trouble!

Alas for thee, my people! alas for thee, Salameh!

Would that my eyes had seen it not, this day of sorrow."

But he answered her with signs: "Nay, but much speech
is foolish.

Rail not at fortune's hand, since all, even my abasement,

Is by permission of Him who knoweth the heart's secrets.

Yet will I show thee a thing shall be to thee a wonder,

Only do thou have patience, and wait on heaven's justice.

And the hero, Abu Zeyd, vowed vows and chaunted verses,

And the chains fell from his hands, as it were in handfuls
of cotton.

Which when the Arabs saw, they told the Agheyli Jaber.

And they said, "Thou didst obey this sayer of sooth, this
Bedr,

And so did also we, since clear it was thy bidding.

Yet what things we have seen, O Prince, what mighty
wonders!

For we saw the chains from his neck fall down, and the
fetters sundered,

As the cotton flies in the wind, when the light wind sends
it driven.

And now for ourselves we fear lest his wrath for us be kindled.

Think of the day of account." But Fadel, "As God pleaseth !

I flout not the fakir, nor set myself with the stiff-necked.

Rather take ye this other, this sayer of sooths untimely,
Boaster and cheat is he. Nay, cast him straightway in
fettters,

And bring to me the Sheykh, that I may crave his pardon."

So they went forth for the man, the sayer of sooths untimely,
And seized and bound him with bonds. But Bedr aloud
protested,

"Do not this deed, oh men, and be not ill in your dealings.
Yet were it well, O Prince, thou shouldst ask of the Sheykh
his pardon,

Make him a place at thy side. And I will reveal thee all
things,

And show thee of the mare, and tell thee sooth of the
Wely."

And when Fadel heard these words he bade them again to
bring him,

Saying, "Mayhap he will spare, and so my mind find
comfort."

And they went again and returned and brought with them
Salameh ;

And the holy man they brought, the man of contempla-
tion.

And to him the Agheyli rose and joyfully embraced him :
Barefoot he stood and kissed his hands, the in and the
outside.

And he said, "O Sheykh, thy pardon I ask for that which
I did thee ;

See, I have borne much grief, do thou forbear with my
dealings,

Grief on account of the mare and desolation of spirit ;

And, when that the image spoke, I did thee a thing un-
seemly,
Yet, oh, the gracious dealing of him that pardoneth
sinners ! ”
And Abu Zeyd assented, “ Ay, truly do I forgive thee.”
And he made him sit by his side. And Jaber bade them
loosen
The chains of the holy man. And they sat, they three
together,
Making cheer and rejoicing. And all the sons of the Arabs
Called to them, “ Pray, O Sheykhs, we too have grace and
fortune,
Since of a truth we perceive that ye are the men of
wonder.”

Said the Narrator :

And when the Sheykh had come, and the man of contemplation, and the soothsayer, and the sons of the great ones, and there had been prepared for them places in the tent, then Fadel the Agheyli turned to the soothsayer, and he said to him, “ Now is the hour come for thee to show thy skill and to speak plainly, and if thou dost not speak sooth then will I slay thee and overwhelm thee with destruction.” But the soothsayer said, “ I hear and obey.” Then went he once more to his image and began to upbraid it with angry words, and he swore great oaths over it, and said to it, “ Verily it was no treaty I made with thee that thou shouldest lie.” And the image began again to move and to speak to Fadel and to those around him, and to tell the tale once more from the beginning, both that which was without and that which was within. And it said, “ O Fadel, how hath the Prince Abu Zeyd saved thy daughter from that traitor and hath slain Sahel and Zohwa for her sake, and how did she then help him to obtain thy mare and to gain that which he desired of thee ! For his is a

wondrous case, and the circumstances of it how strange !” And in making an end of speaking it said, “ But if thou wouldst hearken to my bidding, then wouldst thou make fellowship and friendship with him, and wouldst listen to his words and wouldst follow his counsel, nor be his adversary for ever. For to thee he were the truest of companions and of helpers. And he were of more advantage to thee than all the tribes, even than thine own Arabs.”

Said the Narrator :

And when the Emir Fadel heard these words of the image, then cried he with a loud voice, and his cry filled the Assembly and all the tribes heard it, and he swore a great oath and said, “ Yea, verily will I, though he be the first of my foemen, that Abu Zeyd the Helali, the valiant one in fight, who slew my brethren and my kinsmen and my people.” And when he swore that oath, the Prince Abu Zeyd started to his feet and cried with a loud cry which filled the whole Assembly : “ I am here, even I Salameh.” And he recited again the tale from the beginning, and all men heard and listened to the manner of his verses. And the Emir Fadel arose and pressed him to his heart, and all his trouble passed from him, and the tribesmen rejoiced at that which had come about. And thereupon the Narrator began to sing and he said :

Now returneth my tale and my singing and my verses
To that which him befell the Emir Agheyli Jaber.
For when they had sat them down, the chiefs in the pavilion,
And Abu Zeyd with them, and Fadel and Ibn Saleh :
“ Act,” said he, “ by thy word, if thou art a man of knowledge,
But if thou doest it not, know well that I shall slay thee.”
And the soothsayer cried, “ Ay truly, to all be there
rejoicing.”

And he turned him to the image with words like trickling
honey,

And he struck the jar with his wand and he called aloud to
the image,

“Wilt thou be proved a liar? And what is this thou
doest?

Long have we been together, and now thou wouldst me
evil

Shame and a bitter fortune in face of these the great ones?
All thy life wert thou true to me, nor didst thou deceive me.
Marvel it were to-day if thou shouldst be proved a traitor,
Working thus for my death to bring me evil fortune.

What have I done that thou thus shouldst stir their hatred
against me?

Tell me rather the truth of the mare of Agheyli Jaber,
So shall his rage be stilled and he bring me forth with
honour.

But, if thou tellest it not, with my hand will I destroy thee,
And cast thee forth to the flames to be a fuel for burning.
Resolved am I on this, so be not thou of the stiff-necked.
By this and by that I swear, even by the valley of Barhut.”
And the image rose in its place, and it called out clear to
the people,

“Peace be to ye, O people, and peace to Agheyli Jaber.
Listen awhile, O Fadel. The tale of thy mare is a wonder.
This was its cause and reason: the ancient Lady Ghanimeh,
She the mother of Amer, who went to the Helali.

She came in the early morn, and found them sitting in
council,

Appealed to Salameh’s honour, his, Abu Zeyd the Hejazi,
His the lion, the dealer of blows, of wrongs the avenger.
She asked of him the grey mare, and he vowed to do her
bidding,

Promised before them all, the great ones there with the
least ones.

And they heard him speak. And to him is life less dear
than honour.

And she said she would wait his coming with the mare,
among the camp-fires.

And Abu Zeyd arose and dight him for the journey,
Mounted his running camel, and went from them a wanderer.
And he cut a road through the void, the empty plains and
the mountains,

Till that he reached your land and housed within your
dwellings.

Clad as a poet he came and entered in disguisement.

And he learned the way of you all, unknown to you, in
secret.

And he waited the coming of night till the dark should
spread its curtain,

Sitting thus in your midst with beating heart till the night
time.

For he is a master of wiles, perplexing with disguisements.

For whiles as a Syrian he comes, and whiles as a Mogrebbin,

Whiles as from Egypt's land, or a black slave, or from
Berber,

Or as a singer of songs from the utmost lands of the Persians.

And the day he came to thy tribe, he slew Sahel Ibn Aäf,
Him, O Prince, who is known to men for his deeds of evil.

And with him he slew Zohwa Bint Nasser, his companion,
He, the thief of thy mare, protecting thus thy daughter,
Slaying the traitors twain, and dealing sure destruction.

For they were together there for a foul deed in the darkness,
And Abu Zeyd gave ear when they complained of thy
doing,

How thou hadst slain his father and seized upon his riches,
And how he desired a vengeance, even on thy daughter
Alia.

And when that Zohwa heard him, she said, 'I will bring
her to thee.'

And to Alia's tent came she and remained with her the
night through,
Talking till well two-thirds of the night were spent in discourses.

And afterwards she said, ' And who is this dog of the
Arabs ?

Is not thy father king, and lord, and sheykh of the Arabs ? '
So she went with her through the night, and fate shut fast
her eyelids,

And when they were come to the desert, then Sahel, the
dog, assailed her,

Seized her strait by the throat, and clutched her necklace
of jewels.

And she called to him, ' Nay, spare me.' But he denied
her pleadings.

And she cried aloud to her Lord, and made her supplication.

And when that she had prayed then spake she the name of
Salameh,

Even of Abu Zeyd, the hero, the right arm of Amer,

And at her voice he came and slew those two in the darkness.

And the dark one loosed her bonds and cut her bindings
asunder,

And bade her begone to her people and see that none should
know it.

And she answered him, ' Nay truly, but first I would know
thy lineage.'

And they made an oath together, and they went to the
pavilion,

And twenty nights and days were they two there rejoicing."
Thus then spoke the image as though it had seen and
heard them.

And lastly the image said, " O prince, O thou of the great
ones,

If thou wouldst do my bidding, let there be peace between ye."

Then was the image silent. But Fadel, "God be my witness

That there is peace between us, even though he be the Helali,

Abu Zeyd the destroyer, the enemy of our people.

What though he slew my kin, eight men of them together,
Even eight of my kin, with Zohwa Ibn Talh, and Faher,
Yet may God give him peace, and may the tribes befriend him."

And Abu Zeyd arose and he spoke to the Assembly,
And he cried aloud, "Behold me, Abu Zeyd of Helal Ibn Amer,

I in truth was the slayer of these eight men of thy people,
Taking them thus from their joy and dealing them destruction.

And lo, thou art here to-day in the midst of these thy great ones,

And I one man alone. Yet if thou stand indebted,
Take thy due of the lion's blood and all that are with thee.
Now is their time to strike. Let none hold back to spare me."

But Fadel the Agheyli spoke, and thus aloud he addressed him,

"Welcome to thee, O Prince, O thou the right arm of Amer."

And he rose up and embraced him and made him sit at his right hand,

And Abu Zeyd made known the hiding-place of the grey mare.

And the Arabs pressed around, and the poets sang of his praises.

And the heart of the Agheyli was soothed and he cried, "O right arm of Amer,

Lo, thou shalt have thy wish, though thou ask my soul I
will give it."

And this their story is, the true tale of their doings.

VIII

Said the Narrator :

And when the image had done speaking and every one had listened to the story in its completeness, then believed they the words of Bedr ibn Saleh, and their hearts were comforted, and the king welcomed the Emir Abu Zeyd with the fulness of honour, and he showed favour likewise to Bedr, even to the man of contemplation, and all trouble passed from his mind. Then Abu Zeyd made known to them the place of the grey mare and they went forth and took her from the cave and made haste to feast and be merry. And after that, the Emir Fadel remained talking with the Emir Abu Zeyd for seven days, and then Abu Zeyd desired to return to his own country. Then said to him the Emir Fadel, when he had given him noble gifts and with them the mare and slaves, "What wilt thou at my hand?" And he said to him, "That which I would have of thee is Alia thy daughter." But Fadel answered, "Ay, by the faith of the Arabs, that also is my desire and the extreme of my longings, and moreover thou shalt have with her all else whatsoever thou desirest. And here the Narrator once more singeth :

Now returneth my tale to Fadel the Agheyli Jaber,
And with him the hero Salameh and all that were there
assembled.

The Arabs heheld Ibn Saleh. And lo the Agheyli Jaber
Clothed him with robes of honour and him Abu Zeyd the
Helali.

And they bore him a witness of glory, even all the great
ones assembled.

And he sat with them seven days a guest new clothed and rejoicing,
And all men brought him gifts, of cloth and embroidered kaftans,
And fifty steeds of the grey, and fifty steeds of the bay ones,
And fifty camels the red, and fifty slaves of the black ones.
But after the seventh day he said to them, "All is ended, I must away on my journey." And Fadel, "As thou willest,
Only return to our joy, and we from afar will meet thee.
For 'twixt us brotherhood is, now and to our life's ending,
Thou for a brother to me and I to thee for a brother."
And he said, "Be thou clear of evil, thou first of friends and of brothers.
Still is there one thing left, of Alia the espousals,
If she should take my hand, then were I with ye, and quickly."
And they answered all and declared "Nay, this were for our rejoicing,
So should ye two remain, twin heroes with us ever."

Said the Narrator :

And when the Emir Abu Zeyd desired to depart, then said to him the Emir Jaber, "Was it for the mare then that thou camest to our country, or for what else ?" And Abu Zeyd related to him the whole story of the ancient dame and of all that had happened. And the Emir Fadel cried to the grooms, "Lead forth the mare, the Hamameh." And they led her forth and brought her to the Emir Abu Zeyd. And he departed with her after that he had bidden them farewell. And he went back to those shepherds, and took from them his riding camel, and ceased not until he had returned unto his own Arabs. And when they saw him they saluted him, and came around him and rejoiced exceedingly, and they made feastings, and the tribe rejoiced.

And Abu Zeyd related to them all that had happened to him, and they wondered greatly and all the tribe with them. Then sent he to the ancient dame Ghanimeh and begged of her that she might come, and when she came he delivered to her the mare and the gifts and bade her depart to her own people. But she said to him, "Nay, but send with me one who shall charge himself with my affairs." And he sent with her Abul Komsan. And Abul Komsan went with Ghanimeh. And they had not journeyed seven days when they met with the tribe of En Naaman. And Abul Komsan went unto Naaman and said to him: "Saith my lord Abu Zeyd to thee, let Amer espouse thy daughter, for behold, the mare thou didst require of him my lord hath obtained her for thee." But when Naaman heard that, he said, "Take the mare and return to thy Lord and say he will not listen to thy words, neither will he follow thy counsel." But he said to him, "If thou wilt not do this thing then will I slay thee in the midst of thy Arabs, and destroy thee utterly." But when Naaman heard this he leaped upon his mare and rushed upon Abul Komsan. But Abul Komsan struck him with his spear upon his breast and pierced him through, so that the spear shone beyond him. And he called out to all the men of the tribe, and defied them, saying, "I am your peer, and better than your peer." But they said to him, "Nay, but thou hast done us a service, for this one refused to do according to our counsels." So Abul Komsan bade them bury him. And they buried him. Then he bade them to bring Amer before him, and Abul Komsan made rejoicings for him and placed him upon the seat of authority in the room of his uncle Naaman. And they brought to him also Betina, the daughter of Naaman, and he ordered their marriage. And when he had done all these things he desired to leave them. But they brought him gifts and they led forth for him the mare, and he took her and his

leave of them and departed, and returned to his master and told him all the story. And Abu Zeyd rejoiced and gave thanks.

And the Narrator once more began his singing and he said :

Saith the Agheyli Fadel the hero, " O thou, Helali,
O thou man of descent, explain to me this thy coming.
Was it for only this, the stealing of my grey mare,
Or for some other thing thou lightedst at my dwelling ? "
And Abu Zeyd replied, the Hejazi Salameh :

" The cause of all was this, the cause of my meeting with
Alia ;

It was a woman bereaved, a guest of illustrious lineage.
Suppliant she came to me, and made request of the grey
mare,

Wishing to win a bride. And I went, and all my fortune,
Lo, it is known to thee. And this, O Prince, is my
story."

And Fadel called to the grooms, " Lead forth," said he,
" the Hamameh,

And girth her back with a saddle, a saddle crusted with
jewels."

And they brought her forth in her beauty, the fair gazelle
of the desert,

And on her back was a saddle set of silver and jacynts,
And in her mouth a silver bit with gold for her reining,
And the reins of woven silk, of silk and nought else woven.

And Abu Zeyd arose and saluted the Agheyli,
And turned and went on his way, and with him slaves of
the horsemen.

And thus for seven days, till he came to his own pastures ;
And the men of Helal beheld him, even the horsemen of
Amer.

And Abu Ali Serhan made straightway a great feasting.

And the dark one told his tale and all the deeds of his daring.

And he sent for the ancient dame, and handed to her the grey mare,

And with it the gifts and stones, and divers notable treasures.

But she said, "O Abu Zeyd! O thou most worthy of honour!

O thou the beautiful one, may the Lord God grant thee blessing."

And he called to Abul Komsan and bade him attend the lady:

"Go with her straight," said he, "to Naaman, and greet him,

Greet him thus in my name, and all the men that are with him.

Let him deliver the bride to him the son of his brother,

And leave with him in her stead the mare of Agheyli Jaber.

But if he yield her not and be he of the unwilling,

Do thou smite off his head, else is Salameh ready."

And he said, "May but I do it and may thou live in thy glory."

And Abul Komsan went forth and with him a thousand horsemen,

And they rode for seven days to Naaman and his people.

And the slave dismounted with "Peace be with ye," and told him his story.

But he laughed aloud and cried, "What of the mare of Jaber?

Have you the mare in your hand? the grey mare! the Hamameh!"

And Abul Komsan said, "My Lord Abu Zeyd hath brought her;

He hath achieved this thing, and all for the sake of Amer."

But Naaman spoke again, "And is Abu Zeyd thy master?"

Take thee the mare and begone, and speak to him that
hath sent thee ;
Know that of Naaman no man yet hath claimed the
obedience.”
And the slave arose in his wrath, and flung himself in his
saddle
And roared aloud like a lion, a lion roused to the seizing,
And for Naaman nought cared he, and nought for them
that were with him.
And Naaman called to his people, “ Ho ye, the tribesmen
of Dagher !
Ho, to my help, O men ! ” But quick as the lightning
flasheth,
Struck the slave with his spear, and the point passed
through his body,
Even Naaman’s body. And all men fled in confusion.
But Abul Komsan cried, “ Fear not. Nay, rather together
Go we and bury this dog, for he died an unbeliever.”
And they went with Abul Komsan and buried him as he
bade them.
And he sent of them for Amer and he sent of them for
Betina.
And the wedding feasts were spread and the days went
in rejoicing.
And Amer returned to his people with horses and with
camels.
And they said, “ O Abul Komsan, lo thou art a man of
honour,
For thou hast slain the wicked, and we are thine, the
protected,
And thou hast befriended Amer. Do with us as thou
desirest.”
And he answered them, “ O people, peace be with you, O
people !
Salameh is my lord, to-day and now and for ever.”

And Amer brought him the mare and with it gifts and treasures,

And he said, "Thou didst bring this gift. A gift of me thou shalt take her."

So he took the mare at his hand, and the gifts, and he departed ;

And when he came to his tribe he told Abu Zeyd the story. And Abu Zeyd gave thanks, and this is the end of their telling.

Said the Narrator :

And when all these things had happened and the Arabs had rejoiced, and the heart of Amer had been quieted, and he had espoused the daughter of his uncle, even Betina, and when Abul Komsan had returned to his lord with the gifts and with the grey mare, and Abu Zeyd had asked him of the news and he had told him of that which had happened, then gave Abu Zeyd thanks, and next he bethought him of the Princess Alia and of that which had been agreed between them ; and he turned to his people and said to them, "I must go to Fadel the Agheyli Jaber." And they consented thereto. So he took of his Arabs two thousand, and they journeyed until they arrived in that country. And when the horsemen of Agheyl saw him they gave him the salute of peace, and they told the Emir Fadel of the coming of the Emir Abu Zeyd. And he rose up quickly and went forth and saluted him with the salute of peace and brought him to the Divan and gave him a seat at his side. And he sat him down in comfort. And Abu Zeyd brought forward his gifts, and he restored the mare to Fadel, and Fadel's heart was cured of its sickness. And they sent for all the princes, and they wrote the contract of the marriage of Alia, and the wedding was made between Alia and Abu Zeyd. And they made a seven days' rejoicing. And Abu Zeyd remained yet a long while with

them, but at the last he grew weary and longed for his own people. And he asked leave of the Agheyli that he should depart, who straightway agreed, and gave to Alia all manner of convenience and gifts for the journey. And they arose and departed, he and she together, to those their lands. And they lived thus in happiness until the end of their time.

TO GOD BE PRAISE !

POLITICAL POEMS

THE WIND AND THE WHIRLWIND

(1883)

THE CANON OF AUGHRIM

(1888)

SATAN ABSOLVED

(1899)

A CORONATION ODE

(1911)

THE WIND AND THE WHIRLWIND

(1883)

I HAVE a thing to say. But how to say it ?
I have a cause to plead. But to what ears ?
How shall I move a world by lamentation,
A world which heeded not a Nation's tears ?

How shall I speak of justice to the aggressors,
Of right to Kings whose rights include all wrong,
Of truth to Statecraft, true but in deceiving,
Of peace to Prelates, pity to the Strong ?

Where shall I find a hearing ? In high places ?
The voice of havock drowns the voice of good.
On the throne's steps ? The elders of the nation
Rise in their ranks and call aloud for blood.

Where ? In the street ? Alas for the world's reason !
Not Peers not Priests alone this deed have done.
The clothes of those high Hebrews stoning Stephen
Were held by all of us,—ay every one.

Yet none the less I speak. Nay, here by Heaven
This task at least a poet best may do,
To stand alone against the mighty many,
To force a hearing for the weak and few.

Unthanked, unhonoured,—yet a task of glory,
Not in his day, but in an age more wise,
When those poor Chancellors have found their portion
And lie forgotten in their dust of lies.

And who shall say that this year's cause of freedom
Lost on the Nile has not as worthy proved
Of poet's hymning as the cause which Milton
Sang in his blindness or which Dante loved ?

The fall of Guelph beneath the spears of Valois,
Freedom betrayed, the Ghibelline restored :
Have we not seen it, we who caused this anguish,
Exile and fear, proscription and the sword ?

Or shall God less avenge in their wild valley
Where they lie slaughtered those poor sheep whose fold
In the grey twilight of our wrath we harried
To serve the worshippers of stocks and gold ?

This fails. That finds its hour. This fights. That falters.
Greece is stamped out beneath a Wolseley's heels.
Or Egypt is avenged of her long mourning,
And hurls her Persians back to their own keels.

'Tis not alone the victor who is noble.
'Tis not alone the wise man who is wise.
There is a voice of sorrow in all shouting,
And shame pursues not only him who flies.

To fight and conquer : 'tis the boast of heroes.
To fight and fly : of this men do not speak.
Yet shall there come a day when men shall tremble
Rather than do misdeeds upon the

A day when statesmen baffled in their daring
Shall rather fear to wield the sword in vain
Than to give back their charge to a hurt nation,
And own their frailties, and resign their reign,

A day of wrath when all fame shall remember
Of this year's work shall be the fall of one
Who, standing foremost in her paths of virtue,
Bent a fool's knee at War's red altar-stone,

And left all virtue beggared in his falling,
A sign to England of new griefs to come,
Her priest of peace who sold his creed for glory
And marched to carnage at the tuck of drum.

Therefore I fear not. Rather let this record
Stand of the past, ere God's revenge shall chase
From place to punishment His sad vicegerents
Of power on Earth.—I fling it in their face !

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I have a thing to say. But how to say it ?
Out of the East a twilight had been born.
It was not day. Yet the long night was waning,
And the spent nations watched it less forlorn.

Out of the silence of the joyless ages
A voice had spoken, such as the first bird
Speaks to the woods, before the morning wakens,
And the World starting to its feet had heard.

Men hailed it as a prophecy. Its utterance
Was in that tongue divine the Orient knew.
It spoke of hope. Men hailed it as a brother's.
It spoke of happiness. Men deemed it true.

There in the land of Death, where toil is cradled,
That tearful Nile, unknown to Liberty,
It spoke in passionate tones of human freedom,
And of those rights of Man which cannot die,

Till from the cavern of long fear, whose portals
Had backward rolled, and hardly yet aloud,
Men prisoned stole like ghosts and joined the chorus,
And chaunted trembling, each man in his shroud :

Justice and peace, the brotherhood of nations,
Love and goodwill of all mankind to man :
These were the words they caught and echoed strangely,
Deeming them portions of some Godlike plan,

A plan thus first to their own land imparted.
They did not know the irony of Fate,
The mockery of man's freedom, and the laughter
Which greets a brother's love from those that hate.

Oh for the beauty of hope's dreams ! The childhood
Of that old land, long impotent in pain,
Cast off its slough of sorrow with its silence,
And laughed and shouted and grew new again.

And in the streets, where still the shade of Pharaoh
Stalked in his sons, the Mamelukian horde,
Youth greeted youth with words of exultation
And shook his chains and clutched as for a sword :

Student and merchant, Jew, and Copt, and Moslem,
All whose scarred backs had bent to the same rod,
Fired with one mighty thought, their feuds forgotten,
Stood hand in hand and praising the same God.

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I have a thing to say. But how to say it ?
As in the days of Moses in the land,
God sent a man of prayer before his people
To speak to Pharaoh, and to loose his hand.

Injustice, that hard step-mother of heroes,
Had taught him justice. Him the sight of pain
Moved unto anger, and the voice of weeping
Made his eyes weep as for a comrade slain.

A soldier in the bands of his proud masters
It was his lot to serve. But of his soul
None owned allegiance save the Lord of Armies.
No worship from his God's might him cajole.

Strict was his service. In the law of Heaven
He comfort took and patience under wrong.
And all men loved him for his heart unquailing,
And for the words of pity on his tongue.

Knowledge had come to him in the night-watches,
And strength with fasting, eloquence with prayer.
He stood a Judge from God before the strangers,
The one just man among his people there.

Strongly he spoke : " Now, Heaven be our witness !
Egypt this day has risen from her sleep.
She has put off her mourning and her silence.
It was no law of God that she should weep.

" It was no law of God nor of the Nations
That in this land, alone of the fair Earth,
The hand that sowed should reap not of its labour,
The heart that grieved should profit not of mirth.

“ How have we suffered at the hands of strangers,
Binding their sheaves, and harvesting their wrath !
Our service has been bitter, and our wages
Hunger and pain and nakedness and drouth.

“ Which of them pitied us ? Of all our princes,
Was there one Sultan listened to our cry ?
Their palaces we built, their tombs, their temples.
What did they build but tombs for Liberty ?

“ To live in ignorance, to die by service,
To pay our tribute and our stripes receive :
This was the ransom of our toil in Eden,
This, and our one sad liberty—to grieve.

“ We have had enough of strangers and of princes
Nursed on our knees and lords within our house.
The bread which they have eaten was our children’s,
For them the feasting and the shame for us.

“ The shadow of their palaces, fair dwellings
Built with our blood and kneaded with our tears,
Darkens the land with darkness of Gehennem,
The lust, the crime, the infamy of years.

“ Did ye not hear it ? From those muffled windows
A sound of women rises and of mirth.
These are our daughters—ay our sons—in prison,
Captives to shame with those who rule the Earth.

“ The silent river, by those gardens-lapping,
To-night receives its burden of new dead,
A man of age sent home with his lord’s wages,
Stones to his feet, a grave-cloth to his head.

“ Walls infamous in beauty, gardens fragrant
With rose and citron and the scent of blood.
God shall blot out the memory of all laughter,
Rather than leave you standing where you stood.

“ We have had enough of princes and of strangers,
Slaves that were Sultans, eunuchs that were kings,
The shame of Sodom is on all their faces.
The curse of Cain pursues them, and it clings.

“ Is there no virtue ? See the pale Greek smiling.
Virtue for him is as a tale of old.
Which be his gods ? The cent per cent in silver.
His God of gods ? The world’s creator, Gold.

“ The Turk that plunders and the Frank that panders,
These are our lords who ply with lust and fraud.
The brothel and the winepress and the dancers
Are gifts unneeded in the lands of God.

“ We need them not. We heed them not. Our faces
Are turned to a new Kebla, a new truth,
Proclaimed by the one God of all the nations
To save His people and renew their youth.

“ A truth which is of knowledge and of reason ;
Which teaches men to mourn no more and live ;
Which tells them of things good as well as evil,
And gives what Liberty alone can give,

“ The counsel to be strong, the will to conquer,
The love of all things just and kind and wise,
Freedom for slaves, fair rights for all as brothers,
The triumph of things true, the scorn of lies.

“ O men, who are my brethren, my soul’s kindred !
That which our fathers dreamed of as a dream,
The sun of peace, and justice, has arisen,
And God shall work in you His perfect scheme.

“ The rulers of your Earth shall cease deceiving,
The men of usury shall fly your land.
Your princes shall be numbered with your servants,
And peace shall guide the sword in your right hand.

“ You shall become a nation with the nations.
Lift up your voices, for the night is past.
Stretch forth your hands. The hands of the free peoples
Have beckoned you the youngest and the last.

“ And in the brotherhood of Man reposing,
Joined to their hopes and nursed in their new day,
The anguish of the years shall be forgotten
And God, with these, shall wipe your tears away.”

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I have a thing to say. But how to say it ?
How shall I tell the mystery of guile,
The fraud that fought, the treason that disbanded,
The gold that slew the children of the Nile ?

The ways of violence are hard to reckon,
And men of right grow feeble in their will,
And Virtue of her sons has been forsaken,
And men of peace have turned aside to kill.

How shall I speak of them, the priests of Baal,
The men who sowed the wind for their ill ends !
The reapers of the whirlwind in that harvest
Were all my countrymen, were some my friends.

Friends, countrymen and lovers of fair freedom,
Souls to whom still my soul laments and cries !
I would not tell the shame of your false dealings,
Save for the blood which clamours to the skies.

A curse on Statecraft, not on you, my Country !
The men you slew were not more foully slain
Than was your honour at their hands you trusted.
They died, you conquered,—both alike in vain.

Crimes find accomplices, and Murder weapons.
The ways of Statesmen are an easy road.
All swords are theirs, the noblest with the neediest.
And those who serve them best are men of good.

What need to blush, to trifle with dissembling ?
A score of honest tongues anon shall swear.
Blood flows. The Senate's self shall spread its mantle
In the world's face, nor own a Cæsar there.

“ Silence ! Who spoke ? ” “ The voice of one disclosing
A truth untimely.” “ With what right to speak ?
Holds he the Queen's commission ? ” “ No, God's only.”
A hundred hands shall smite him on the cheek.

The “ truth ” of Statesmen is the thing they publish,
Their “ falsehood ” the thing done they do not say,
Their “ honour ” what they win from the world's trouble,
Their “ shame ” the “ ay ” which reasons with their
“ nay.”

Alas for Liberty, alas for Egypt !
What chance was yours in this ignoble strife ?
Scorned and betrayed, dishonoured and rejected,
What was there left you but to fight for life ?

The men of honour sold you to dishonour.

The men of truth betrayed you with a kiss.

Your strategy of love too soon outplotted,

What was there left you of your dreams but this ?

You thought to win a world by your fair dealing,

To conquer freedom with no drop of blood.

This was your crime. The world knows no such reasoning.

It neither bore with you nor understood.

Your Pharaoh with his chariots and his dancers,

Him they could understand as of their kin.

He spoke in their own tongue and as their servant,

And owned no virtue they could call a sin.

They took him for his pleasure and their purpose.

They fashioned him as clay to their own pride.

His name they made a cudgel to your hurting,

His treachery a spear-point to your side.

They knew him, and they scorned him and upheld him.

They strengthened him with honours and with ships.

They used him as a shadow for seditions.

They stabbed you with the lying of his lips.

Sad Egypt ! Since that night of misadventure

Which slew your first-born for your Pharaoh's crime,

No plague like this has God decreed against you,

No punishment of all foredoomed in Time.

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I have a thing to say. Oh how to say it !

One summer morning, at the hour of prayer,

And in the face of Man and Man's high Maker,

The thunder of their cannon rent the air.

The flames of death were on you and destruction.
A hail of iron on your heads they poured.
You fought, you fell, you died until the sunset ;
And then you fled forsaken of the Lord.

I care not if you fled. What men call courage
Is the least noble thing of which they boast.
Their victors always are great men of valour.
Find me the valour of the beaten host !

It may be you were cowards. Let them prove it,—
What matter ? Were you women in the fight,
Your courage were the greater that a moment
You steeled your weakness in the cause of right.

Oh I would rather fly with the first craven
Who flung his arms away in your good cause,
Than head the hottest charge by England vaunted
In all the record of her unjust wars !

Poor sheep ! they scattered you. Poor slaves ! they
bowed you.

You prayed for your dear lives with your mute hands.
They answered you with laughter and with shouting,
And slew you in your thousands on the sands.

They led you with arms bound to your betrayer :
His slaves, they said, recaptured for his will.
They bade him to take heart and fill his vengeance.
They gave him his lost sword that he might kill.

They filled for him his dungeons with your children.
They chartered him new gaolers from strange shores :
The Arnaout and the Cherkess for his minions,
Their soldiers for the sentries at his doors.

He plied you with the whip, the rope, the thumb-screw.

They plied you with the scourging of vain words.

He sent his slaves, his eunuchs, to insult you.

They sent you laughter on the lips of Lords.

They bound you to the pillar of their firmans.

They placed for sceptre in your hand a pen.

They cast lots for the garments of your treaties,

And brought you naked to the gaze of men.

They called on your High Priest for your death mandate.

They framed indictments on you from your laws.

For him men loved they offered a Barabbas.

They washed their hands and found you without cause.

They scoffed at you and pointed in derision,

Crowned with their thorns and nailed upon their tree.

And at your head their Pilate wrote the inscription :

“ This is the land restored to Liberty ! ”

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Oh insolence of strength ! Oh boast of wisdom !

Oh poverty in all things truly wise !

Thinkest thou, England, God can be outwitted

For ever thus by him who sells and buys ?

Thou sellest the sad nations to their ruin.

What hast thou bought ? The child within the womb,

The son of him thou slayest to thy hurting,

Shall answer thee, “ An Empire for thy tomb.”

Thou hast joined house to house for thy perdition.

Thou hast done evil in the name of right.

Thou hast made bitter sweet and the sweet bitter,

And called light darkness and the darkness light.

Thou art become a by-word for dissembling,
A beacon to thy neighbours for all fraud.
Thy deeds of violence men count and reckon.
Who takes the sword shall perish by the sword.

Thou hast deserved men's hatred. They shall hate thee.
Thou hast deserved men's fear. Their fear shall kill.
Thou hast thy foot upon the weak. The weakest
With his bruised head shall strike thee on the heel.

Thou wentest to this Egypt for thy pleasure.
Thou shalt remain with her for thy sore pain.
Thou hast possessed her beauty. Thou wouldst leave her.
Nay. Thou shalt lie with her as thou hast lain.

She shall bring shame upon thy face with all men.
She shall disease thee with her grief and fear.
Thou shalt grow sick and feeble in her ruin.
Thou shalt repay her to the last sad tear.

Her kindred shall surround thee with strange clamours,
Dogging thy steps till thou shalt loathe their din.
The friends thou hast deceived shall watch in anger.
Thy children shall upbraid thee with thy sin.

All shall be counted thee a crime,—thy patience
With thy impatience. Thy best thought shall wound.
Thou shalt grow weary of thy work thus fashioned,
And walk in fear with eyes upon the ground.

The Empire thou didst build shall be divided.
Thou shalt be weighed in thine own balances
Of usury to peoples and to princes,
And be found wanting by the world and these.

They shall possess the lands by thee forsaken
And not regret thee. On their seas no more
Thy ships shall bear destruction to the nations,
Or thy guns thunder on a fenceless shore.

Thou hadst no pity in thy day of triumph.
These shall not pity thee. The world shall move
On its high course and leave thee to thy silence,
Scorned by the creatures that thou couldst not love.

Thy Empire shall be parted, and thy kingdom.
At thy own doors a kingdom shall arise,
Where freedom shall be preached and the wrong righted
Which thy unwisdom wrought in days unwise.

Truth yet shall triumph in a world of justice.
This is of faith. I swear it. East and west
The law of Man's progression shall accomplish
Even this last great marvel with the rest.

Thou wouldst not further it. Thou canst not hinder.
If thou shalt learn in time, thou yet shalt live.
But God shall ease thy hand of its dominion,
And give to these the rights thou wouldst not give.

The nations of the East have left their childhood.
Thou art grown old. Their manhood is to come ;
And they shall carry on Earth's high tradition
Through the long ages when thy lips are dumb,

Till all shall be wrought out. O Lands of weeping,
Lands watered by the rivers of old Time,
Ganges and Indus and the streams of Eden,
Yours is the future of the world's sublime.

Yours was the fount of man's first inspiration,
The well of wisdom whence he earliest drew.
And yours shall be the flood-time of his reason,
The stream of strength which shall his strength renew.

The wisdom of the West is but a madness,
The fret of shallow waters in their bed.
Yours is the flow, the fulness of Man's patience
The ocean of God's rest inherited.

And thou too, Egypt, mourner of the nations,
Though thou hast died to-day in all men's sight,
And though upon thy cross with thieves thou hangest,
Yet shall thy wrong be justified in right.

'Twas meet one man should die for the whole people.
Thou wert the victim chosen to retrieve
The sorrows of the Earth with full deliverance.
And, as thou diest, these shall surely live.

Thy prophets have been scattered through the cities.
The seed of martyrdom thy sons have sown
Shall make of thee a glory and a witness
In all men's hearts held captive with thine own.

Thou shalt not be forsaken in thy children.
Thy righteous blood shall fructify the Earth.
The virtuous of all lands shall be thy kindred,
And death shall be to thee a better birth.

Therefore I do not grieve. Oh hear me, Egypt !
Even in death thou art not wholly dead.
And hear me, England ! Nay. Thou needs must hear me.
I had a thing to say. And it is said.

THE CANON OF AUGHRIM

(1888)

You ask me of English honour, whether your Nation is just ?
Justice for us is a word divine, a name we revere,
Alas, no more than a name, a thing laid by in the dust.
The world shall know it again, but not in this month or
year.

Honour ? Oh no, you profane it. Justice ? What words !
What deeds !
Look at the suppliant Earth with its living burden of men.
Here and to Hindostan the nations and kings and creeds
Praise your name as a god's, the god of their children slain.

Which of us doubts your justice ? It is not here in the West,
After six hundred years of pitiless legal war,
The sons of our soil are in doubt. They know, who have
borne it, best :
The world is famished for justice. You give us a stone,
your law.

These are its fruits. Yet, think you, the Ireland where men
weep
Once was a jubilant land and dear to the Saints of God.
All you have made it to-day is a hell to conquer and keep,
Yours by the right of the strongest hand, the right of
the rod.

History tells the story in signs deep writ on the soil,
Plain and clear in indelible type both for fools and
wise.

Here is no need of books, of any expositor's coil.
He who runs may read, and he may weep who has eyes.

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This is the plain of Aughrim, renowned in our Irish story
Because of the blood that was shed, the last in arms by
our sons,
A fight in battle array, with more of grief than of glory,
Where as a Nation we died to dirge of your English
guns.

So the Chroniclers tell us, and turn in silence their page,
Ending the fighting here. I tell you the Chroniclers lie.
Spite of the hush of the dead, the battle from age to age
Flames on still through the land, and still at men's hands
men die.

Look ! I will show you the footsteps of those who have died
at your hand,
Done to death by your law, alas, and not by the sword,
Only their work remaining, a nations's track in the sand,
Ridge and furrow of ancient fields half hid in the
sward.

Step by step they retreated. You fenced them out with
your Pale,
Back from township and city and cornland fair by the
Sea.

Waterford, Youghal and Wexford you took and the
Golden Vale.

Tears were their portion assigned : for you their demesnes
in fee.

Back to the forest and bog. They shouldered their spades
like men,

Fought with the wolf and the rock and the hunger which
holds the hill.

Still new homesteads arose where fever lurked in the fen,
Still your law was a sword that hunted and dogged them
still.

Magistrate, landlord, bailiff, process-server and spy,
These were the dogs of your pack, which scented the
land's increase.

Vainly, like hares, they lay in the forms they had fashioned
to die.

Justice hunted them forth by the hand of the Justice of
Peace.

Look at it closer, thus, and shading your eyes with your
hand,

Far as a bird could reach, to the utmost edge of the plain,
What do you see but grass ! And what do you understand ?
Cattle that graze on the grass.—Alas, you have looked in
vain.

See with my eyes. They are older than yours, but more
keen in their love.

See what I saw as a boy in the fields, as a priest by the
ways.

See what I saw in anger with angels watching above
Hiding their faces for shame in the day of the terrible
days.

Horsemen and footmen and guns. They were here. I have
seen them, though some
Say that two hundred years have passed since the battle
was stilled.
Ay, and the cry of the wounded, drowned by the beat of
the drum.
Did I not hear with my ears how it rose like the wail of a
child ?

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I was a student then, a boy, in the days now forgotten,
When for our school-house the chapel must serve, for our
master the priest.
Many a Latin theme have I scrawled on the altar rails
rotten,
Thinking no more of the house of God than the house of
the least.

Yet we were saints in Aughrim. An Eden the plain then
stood,
Covered with gardens round, a happy and holy place,
Rich in the generations of those who had shed their
blood,
Bound to their faith by the martyr's bond and the power
of grace.

They do us wrong who affirm the Irish people are sad.
Sad we are in the lands afar, but not in our home.
Oh, if you knew the gladness with which our people are
glad,
Well might you grieve for your own, the poor in your
towns of doom.

Here, God knows it, we hunger. But hunger, a little, is
well,
Man with full stomach is proud, his heart is shut to the
poor.
Well, too, is persecution, since thus through its sting we
rebel,
Clinging yet more to our love and our hate in the homes
we adore.

Mine is a mission of peace, to save men's souls in the world,
Not to make converts to Hell, for Ireland's sake even,
you say.
Why should I preach of rebellion, and hatred, words
impotent hurled
Each like a spear from the lips to strike whom it lists in
the fray ?

Hark. You shall hear it. This parish was mine. I
remember it all
Tilled in squares, like a chess-board, each house and
holding apart.
Down where the nettles grow you may mark the line of the
wall
Bounding the chapel field where our dead lie heart on
heart.

It was not the famine killed them. God knows in that evil
year
He pressed us a little hard, but he spared us our lives
and joy.
Only the old and weak were taken. The rest stood clear,
Quit of their debt to Death. God struck, but not to
destroy.

The wolves of the world were fiercer. The wolves of the
world to-day

Go in sheep's clothing all, with names that the world
applauds.

Nobody now draws sword or spear with intent to slay.

Death is done with a sigh, and mercy tightens the cords.

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It was a woman did it. Her father, the lawyer Blake,
Purchased the land for a song,—some say, or less, for a
debt

Owed by the former Lord, a broken spendthrift and
rake—

And left it hers when he died with all he could grip
or get.

Timothy Blake was not loved. He had too much in his
heart

Of the law of tenures, for love. No word men spoke in
his praise.

Yet, in his lawyer's way, and deeds and titles apart,

All were allowed to live who paid their rent in his
days.

Little Miss Blake was his daughter. A pink-faced school-
girl she came

First from Dublin city to live in her father's house,
She and her dogs and horses, unconscious of shame or
blame.

Who would have guessed her cruel with manners meek
as a mouse?

Nothing in truth was further, or further seemed, from her heart,
Set as it was on pleasure and undisturbed with pain,
So she might ride with the hounds when winter brought round its sport,
Or angle a trout from the river, than war with her fellow men.

She was fastidious, too, with her English education,
And pained at want and squalor, things hard she should understand.
The sight of poverty touched the sense of what was due to her station,
And still in her earlier years she gave with an open hand.

The village was poor to look at, a row of houses, no more,
With just four walls and the thatch in holes where the fowls passed through.
A shame to us all, she averred, and her, so near to her door,
She sent us for slates to the quarry and bade us build them anew.

The Chapel, too, was unsightly. A Protestant she, and yet
Decency needs must be in a house of prayer, she said.
Perched on a rising ground in sight of her windows set,
Its shapeless walls were her grief. She built it a new façade.

What was it changed her heart ? God knows. I know not.
Some say
She set her fancy on one above her in rank and pride.
Young Lord Clair at the Castle had danced with her. Then one day
Dancing and she were at odds. He had taken an English bride.

This, or it may be less, a foolish word from a friend,
A jest related to ears already wounded and sore,
A pang of jealousy roused for the sake of some private end,
Or only the greed of gain, of more begotten of more.

These were the days of plenty, of prices rising, men
thought
Still to rise for ever, and all were eager to buy.
Landlord with landlord vied, and tenant with tenant bought.
Riches make selfish souls, and gain has an evil eye.

Oh ! the economist fraud, with wealth of nations for
text,
How has it robbed the poor of their one poor right to
live !
Only the fields grow fat. The men that delve them are
vexed,
Scourged with the horse-leech cry of the daughter of
hunger, " give."

Why should I blame this woman ? She practised what all
men preach,
Duty to Man a little, but much to herself and land.
She made two blades of grass to grow in the place of each.
She took two guineas for one. What more would your
laws demand ?

If in her way men died, Economy's rules are stern,
Stern as the floods and droughts, the tempests and fires
and seas.
Men but cumber the land whose labour is weak to earn
More than their board and bed ; much cattle were worthy
these.

So those argued who served her. What wonder if she too
grew

Hard in her dealings around, and grudged their lands to
the poor ?

Cary, her agent, died. The day she engaged the new,
Grief stepped into the village, and Death sat down at the
door.

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Rent ? Who speaks of the rent ? We Irish who till the
soil,

Are ever ready to pay the tribute your laws impose ;
You, the conquering race, have portioned to each his toil ;
We, the conquered, bring the ransom due to our woes.

Here is no case of justice, of just debts made or unjust.

Contracts 'twixt freemen are, not here, where but one is
free.

No man argues of right, who pays the toll that he must ;
Life is dear to all, and rent is the leave to be.

No. None argued of rent. Each paid, or he could not pay,
Much as the seasons willed, in fatness or hungry years.
Blake's old rental was high. She raised it, and none said
nay ;

Then she raised it again, and made a claim for arrears.

Joyce was her agent now. The rules of Charity bind

Somewhat my tongue in speech, for even truths wrongs
endured ;

All I will say is this, in Joyce you might see combined,
Three worst things, a lawyer, money-lender, and steward.

His was the triple method, to harass by legal plan,
Ruin by note of hand, and serve with the Crown's
decree ;

One by one in his snare he trapped the poor to a man,
Left them bare in the street, and turned in their doors
the key.

How many Christian hearts have I seen thus flouted with
scorn,
Turned adrift on the world in the prime of life and their
pride !

How many lips have I heard curse out the day they were
born,
Souls absolved in their anger to die on the bare hill-side !

All for Miss Blake and the law, and Joyce's profit on
fees !

All for Imperial order, to see the Queen's writ run !
All for the honour of England, mistress of half the seas !
All in the name of justice, the purest under the sun !

Pitiful God of justice ! You speak of order and law ?
Order ! the law of blood which sets the stoat on the
track ;

Law ! the order of death which has glutted the soldier's
maw,
When Hell lies drunk in a city the morning after a sack.

Order and law and justice ! All noble things, but defiled,
Made to stink in men's nostrils, a carrion refuse of good,
Till God Himself is debased in the work of His hands
beguiled,
And good and bad are as one in the mind of the multitude.

All in vain we argue who preach submission to Heaven.

Even to us who know it, such mercy is hard to find.

How then submission to Man by whom no quarter is given ?

Vainly and thrice in vain. That nut has too hard a rind.

Then men rise in their anger. Another justice they seek.

Maxims of right prevail traced down from a pagan age ;

These take the place of the gospel your laws have robbed from the weak.

Who shall convince them of wrong, or turn the worm from his rage ?

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Which are the first fruits of freedom ? Truth, Courage, Compassion. A man,

Nursed from his childhood in right and guarded close by the law,

Why should he trifle with virtue or doubt to do what he can

Fearless in sight of the world, his life without failure or flaw ?

All things come to the strong, power, riches, fair living, repute,

Conscience of worth and of virtue, plain speaking and dealing as plain.

Oh, fair words are easy to speak when the world spreads its pearls at your foot.

Free is humanity's fetter with pleasure gilding the chain.

The Englishman's word, who shall doubt it? The poor
Celt, truly, he lies.

Fie on his houghing of cattle, his blunderbuss fired from
the hedge!

Witness swears falsely to murder. You throw up your
innocent eyes,

Rightly, for murder and lying set honest teeth upon edge.

Yet, mark how circumstance alters. You plant your
Englishman down

Strange on the banks of the Nile or Niger to shift with
new life.

All things are stronger than he. He fears men's fanatic
frown,

Straightway fawns at their knees, his fingers clutching
the knife.

He is kindly. Yet, think you he spares them, the servant,
the cattle, the child,

The wife he has wedded in falsehood, the Prince who
clothed him in gold?

Out on such womanly scruples! He boasts the friends he
beguiled,

The poisoned wells on his track, the poor slaves starved
on the wold.

This is necessity's law? Ay, truly. Necessity teaches

Sternly the Devil's truth, and he that hath ears may hear.

Only the grace of God interprets the wrong Hell preaches.

Only the patience of perfect love can cast out fear.

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Joyce was found on his doorstep, stone dead, one Sunday morning,

Shot by an unknown hand, a charge of slugs in his chest,
The blow had fallen unheard, without either sign or warning,
Save for the notice-to-quit pinned to the dead man's breast.

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Oh, that terrible morning of grief to angels and men !

I who knew, none better, the truth that until that day
Sin in its larger sense was hardly within the ken

Of these poor peasant souls, what dared I devise or say ?

A deed of terror ? Yes. A murder ? Yes. A foul crime ?

True, but a signal of battle, the first blood spilt in a war.
Who could foresee the sequence of wrong to the end of time ?

Who would listen to peace with the red flag waving afar ?

War, war, war, was the issue in all men's minds as they stood

Watching the constable force paraded that afternoon;
War of the ancient sort when men lay wait in a wood
Spying the Norman camps low crouched in a waning moon.

Group with group they whispered. Their eyes looked strangely and new,

Lit with the guilty knowledge as thoughts of the dead would pass.

It was a pitiful sight to mark how the anger grew
 In souls that had prayed as children that very morning at
 Mass.

The answer to Joyce's murder was swift. Two strokes of
 the pen,
 Set by Miss Blake's fair hand on parchment white as her
 face,
 Gave what remained of the parish, lands, tenements, chapel,
 and mill,
 All to a Scotch stock farmer to hold on a single lease.

Here stands the story written. The parchment itself could
 show
 Hardly more of their death than this great desolate plain.
 The poor potato trenches they dug, how greenly they grow !
 Grass, all grass for ever, the graves of our women and
 men !

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And did all die ? You ask it. I ask you in turn, " What is
 death ? "

Death by disease or battle, with gaping wounds for a
 door :

Through it the prisoned soul runs forth with the prisoned
 breath,

And what is lost for the one the other gains it and more :

This is the death of the body. Some died thus, fortunate
 ones,

Here and there a woman taken in labour of birth,

Here and there a man struck down on his cold hearth stones,

Here and there a child, or grey beard bent to the earth

Heaven in pity took them. Their innocent souls received
All that the Church can give of help on the onward way.
Here as they lived they died, believing all they believed.
Here their bodies rest, clay kneaded with kindred clay.

Every eviction in Ireland brings one such physical loss,
Weak ones left by the road, grief touching the feeble brain.
None of us mourn such dead who hold the creed of the
Cross,
Counting as sure their certain hope of eternal gain.

Not for these is my anger. Love grieves, but the cicatrice
closes,
Ending in peace of heart. The dead are doubly our own.
But what of that other death for which love strews no roses,
Death of the altered soul, lost, perished, forever gone ?

Deep in the gulf of your cities they lie, the poor lorn
creatures,
Made in God's image once, His folded innocent sheep,
Now misused and profaned, in speech and form and
features
Living like devils and dying like dogs in incestuous sleep.

Seek them where I have found them, in New York, Liverpool,
London,
Cursing and cursed of all, a pustulous human growth,
These same Irish children God made for His glory, undone,
Ay, and undoing your law, while black Hell gapes for you
both.

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There ! You asked for the truth. You have it plain from
my lips.

Scientists tell us the world has no direction or plan,
Only a struggle of Nature, each beast and nation at
grips,
Still the fittest surviving and he the fittest who can.

You are that fittest, the lion to-day in your strength.
To-morrow ?

Well, who knows what other will come with a wider
jaw ?

Justly, you say, the nations give place and yield in their
sorrow ;

Vainly, you say, Christ died in face of the natural law.

Would you have me believe it ? I tell you, if it were so,

If I were not what I am, a priest instructed in grace,
Knowing the truth of the Gospel and holding firm what I
know,

Where should I be at this hour ? Nay, surely not in
this place.

Granted your creed of destruction, your right of the strong
to devour,

Granted your law of Nature that he shall live who can kill,
Find me the law of submission shall stay the weak in his
hour,

His single hour of vengeance, or set a rein on his will.

Where should I be, even I ? Not surely here with my tears,
Weeping an old man's grief at wrongs which are past
regret,

Healing here a little and helping there with my prayers,
All for the sake of Nature, to fill the teeth she has
whet !

Not a priest at Aughrim. My place would be down with
those

Poor lost souls of Ireland, who, loving her far away,
Not too wisely but well, deep down in your docks lie
close,

Waiting the night of ruin which needs must follow your
day.

England's lion is fat. Full-bellied with fortune he sleeps ;
Why disturb his slumber with ominous news of ill ?
Softly from under his paw the prey he has mangled creeps,
Deals his blow in the back, and all the carcase is still.

Logic and counter-logic. You talk of cowardice rarely !
Dynamite under your ships might make even your cheek
white.

Treacherous ? Oh, you are jesting. The natural law works
fairly,
He that has cunning shall live, and he that has poison bite.

Only I dare not believe it. I hold the justice of Heaven
Larger than all the science, and welled from a purer
fount ;

God as greater than Nature, His law than the wonders
seven,

Darwin's sermon on Man redeemed by that on the Mount.

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Thus spoke the Canon of Aughrim, and raised in silence
his hands,

Seeming to bless the battle his eyes had seen on the plain.
Order and law, he murmured, a Nation's track in the sands,
Ridge and furrow of grass, the graves of our women and
men.

SATAN ABSOLVED

A VICTORIAN MYSTERY

(1899)

*(In the antechamber of Heaven. Satan walks alone.
Angels in groups conversing.)*

Satan. To-day is the Lord's "day." Once more on His
good pleasure
I, the Heresiarch, wait and pace these halls at leisure
Among the Orthodox, the unfallen Sons of God.
How sweet in truth Heaven is, its floors of sandal wood,
Its old-world furniture, its linen long in press,
Its incense, mummeries, flowers, its scent of holiness !
Each house has its own smell. The smell of Heaven to me
Intoxicates and haunts,—and hurts. Who would not be
God's liveried servant here, the slave of His behest,
Rather than reign outside ? I like good things the best,
Fair things, things innocent ; and gladly, if He willed,
Would enter His Saints' kingdom—even as a little child.

[Laughs

I have come to make my peace, to crave a full *amaun*,
Peace, pardon, reconciliation, truce to our daggers-drawn,
Which have so long distraught the fair wise Universe,
An end to my rebellion and the mortal curse
Of always evil-doing. He will mayhap agree
I was less wholly wrong about Humanity
The day I dared to warn His wisdom of that flaw.
It was at least the truth, the whole truth, I foresaw

When He must needs create that simian "in His own
Image and likeness." Faugh! the unseemly carrion!
I claim a new revision and with proofs in hand,
No Job now in my path to foil me and withstand.
Oh, I will serve Him well!

[*Certain Angels approach.*

But who are these that come
With their grieved faces pale and eyes of martyrdom?
Not our good Sons of God? They stop, gesticulate,
Argue apart, some weep,—weep, here within Heaven's gate!
Sob almost in God's sight! ay, real salt human tears,
Such as no Spirit wept these thrice three thousand years.
The last shed were my own, that night of reprobation
When I unsheathed my sword and headed the lost nation.
Since then not one of them has spoken above his breath
Or whispered in these courts one word of life or death
Displeasing to the Lord. No Seraph of them all,
Save I this day each year, has dared to cross Heaven's hall
And give voice to ill news, an unwelcome truth to Him.
Not Michael's self hath dared, prince of the Seraphim.
Yet all now wail aloud.—What ails ye, brethren? Speak!
Are ye too in rebellion?

Angels.

Satan, no. But weak

With our long earthly toil, the unthankful care of Man.

Satan. Ye have in truth good cause.

Angels.

And we would know God's plan,

His true thought for the world, the wherefore and the why
Of His long patience mocked, His name in jeopardy.

We have no heart to serve without instructions new.

Satan. Ye have made a late discovery.

Angels.

There is no rain, no dew,

No watering of God's grace that can make green Man's heart,
Or draw him nearer Heaven to play a godlier part.

Our service has grown vain. We have no rest nor sleep;
The Earth's cry is too loud.

Satan. Ye have all cause to weep
Since you depend on Man. I told it and foretold.

Angels. Truly thou didst.

Satan. Dear fools ! But have ye heart to hold
Such plaint before the Lord, to apprise Him of this thing
In its full naked fact and call your reckoning ?

Angels. We dare not face His frown. He lives in
ignorance.

His pride is in His Earth. If He but looks askance
We tremble and grow dumb.

Satan. And ye will bear it then ?

Angels. We dare not grieve His peace. He loves this
race of men.

Satan. The truth should hardly grieve.

Angels. He would count it us for pride.
He holds Mankind redeemed, since His Son stooped and died.
We dare not venture.

Satan. See, I have less than you to lose.
Give me your brief.

Angels. Ay, speak. Thee He will not refuse.
Mayhap thou shalt persuade Him.

Satan. And withal find grace.
The Lord is a just God. He will rejudge this case,
Ay, haply, even mine. O glorious occasion !
To champion Heaven's whole right without shift or evasion
And plead the Angels' cause ! Take courage, my sad heart,
Thine hour hath come to thee, to play this worthiest part
And prove thy right, thine too, to Heaven's moralities,
Not worse than these that wait, only alas more wise !

Angels. Hush ! Silence ! The Lord God !

*(Entereth the LORD GOD, to whom the ANGELS minister.
He taketh His seat upon the throne.)*

The Lord God. Thank ye, My servants all.
Thank ye, good Seraphim. To all and several,

Sons of the House, God's blessing (*aside*) who ne'er gave God pain.

Impeccable white Spirits, tell Me once again
How goeth it with the World, My ordered Universe,
My Powers and Dominations? Michael, thou, rehearse
The glory of the Heavens. Tell Me, star and star,
Do they still sing together in their spheres afar?
Have they their speech, their language? Are their voices
heard?

Michael. All's well with the World. Each morn, as bird
to answering bird,
The Stars shout in Thy glory praise unchanged yet new.
They magnify Thy name.

The Lord God. Truth's self were else untrue.
Time needs be optimist nor foul its own abode.
Else were Creation mocked (*aside*) and haply I not God.
In sooth all's well with the World. And thou My Raphael,
How fare the Spirit hosts? Say, is *thy* world, too, well?

Raphael. All's well with the World. We stand, as aye,
obedient.
We have no thought but Thee, no asking, no intent
More than to laud and worship, O most merciful,
Being of those that wait.

Satan (aside). The contemplative rule
Out-ministers the active. These have right to boast,
Who stand aye in His presence, beyond the Angel host.

The Lord God. And none of ye grow weary?

Raphael. Nay in truth.

The Lord God. Not one?

Satan (aside). God is a jealous God. He doubteth them.

Raphael. Nay, none.

We are not as the Angels.

The Lord God. These have their devoirs,
The search, the novelty. Ye drowse here in your choirs,
Sleep-walkers all,—while these, glad messengers, go forth

Upon new joyous errands, Earthwards, South and North,
 To visit men and cities. What is strange as Man ?
 What fair as his green Globe in all Creation's plan ?
 What ordered as his march of life, of mind, of will ?
 What subtle as his conscience set at grips with ill ?
 Their service needs no sleep who guide Man's destinies !
 (*After a pause*). Speak, Gabriel, thou the last. Is Man
 grown grand and wise ?

Hath he his place on Earth, prince of Time's fashionings,
 Noblest and fairest found, the roof and crown of things ?
 Is the World joyful all in his most perfect joy ?
 Hath the good triumphed, tell, o'er pain and Time's annoy,
 Since Our Son died, who taught the way of perfect peace ?
 Thou knowest it how I love these dear Humanities.
 Is all quite well with Man ?

Gabriel. All's well with the World, ay well.

All's well enough with Man.

Satan (aside). Alas, poor Gabriel.

The Lord God. How meanest thou "enough" ? Man
 holdeth then Earth's seat,

Master of living things. He mild is and discreet,
 Supreme in My Son's peace. The Earth is comforted
 With its long rest from toil, nor goeth aught in dread,
 Seeing all wars have ceased, the mad wars of old time.
 The lion and the lamb lie down in every clime.
 There is no strife for gold, for place, for dignities,
 All holding My Son's creed ! The last fool hath grown
 wise.

He hath renounced his gods, the things of wood and stone !

Gabriel. The Christian name prevaieth. Its dominion
 Groweth in all the lands. From Candia to Cathay
 The fear of Christ is spread, and wide through Africa.

The Lord God. The fear ? And not the love ?

Gabriel. Who knoweth Man's heart ? All bow,
 And all proclaim His might. The manner and the how

It were less safe to argue, since some frailties be.
 We take the outward act to prove conformity.
 All's well enough with Man—most well with Christendom.
The Lord God. Again thou sayest "enough." How
 fareth it in Rome ?

Hath My vicegerent rest ?

Gabriel. He sitteth as of old
 Enthroned in Peter's chair with glories manifold.
 He sang a mass this morning and I heard his prayer.

The Lord God. For Peace ?

Gabriel. And Power on Earth.

The Lord God. For Power ? Hath he no care
 Other than his temporal rule ?

Gabriel. He hath his pastime too.
 He is Italian born and doeth as these do,
 He is happy *uccellando*, deeming it no sin
 In his own Vatican, its garden walls within,
 Watching his fowling-nets. "I watch and pray," saith he :
 "Vigilate et orate."

Satan (aside). O simplicity !

The Lord God. And are the Kings with him ? Do all
 pray with one breath ?

Gabriel. Some priests and poor I saw,—

Satan (aside). The poor he always hath.

Gabriel. His guards, his chamberlains.

The Lord God. The mighty ones, the proud,
 Do they not kneel together daily in one crowd ?
 Have they no common counsel ?

Gabriel. Kings have their own needs,
 Demanding separate service.

Satan (aside). Ay, and their own creeds.
 One cause alone combines them, and one service—mine.

The Lord God. Thou sayest ?

Gabriel. Man still is Man.

The Lord God. We did redeem his line

And crown him with new worship. In the ancient days
His was a stubborn neck. But now he hath found grace,
Being born anew. His gods he hath renounced, sayest
thou ?

He worshippeth the Christ ? What more ?

Gabriel.

Nay, 'tis enow.

He is justified by faith. He hath no fear of Hell
Since he hath won Thy grace. All's well with Man,—most
well.

The Lord God. “ All's well ! ” The fair phrase wearieeth.
It hath a new false ring.

Truce, Gabriel, to thy word-fence. Mark my questioning.
Or rather no—not thou, blest Angel of all good,
Herald of God's glad tidings to a world subdued,
Thou lover tried of Man. I will not question thee,
Lest I should tempt too sore and thou lie cravenly.
Is there no other here, no drudge, to do that task
And lay the secret bare, the face behind the mask ?
One with a soul less white, who loveth less, nay hates ;
One fit for a sad part, the Devil's advocate's ;
One who some wrong hath done, or hath been o'erborne
of ill,

And so hath his tongue loosed ? O for a Soul with will !
O for one hour of Satan !

Satan.

He is here, Lord God,

Ready to speak all truths to Thy face, even “ Ichabod,
Thy glory is departed,” were *that* truth.

The Lord God.

Thou ? Here ?

Satan. A suppliant for Thy pardon, and in love, not fear,
One who Thou knowest doth love Thee, ay, and more than
these.

The Lord God. That word was Peter's once.

Satan.

I speak no flatteries ;

Nor shall I Thee deny for this man nor that maid,
Nor for the cock that crew.

The Lord God. Thou shalt not be gainsaid.
I grant thee audience. Speak.

Satan. Alone ?

The Lord God. 'Twere best alone.
Angels, ye are dismissed. (*The Angels depart.*) Good
Satan, now say on.

Satan (alone with THE LORD GOD). Omnipotent Lord
God ! Thou knowest all. I speak
Only as Thy poor echo, faltering with words weak,
A far-off broken sound, yet haply not unheard.
Thou knowest the Worlds Thou madest, and Thine own
high word

Declaring they were good. Good were they in all sooth
The mighty Globes Thou mouldedst in the World's fair youth,
Launched silent through the void, evolving force and light.
Thou gatheredst in Thy hand's grasp shards of the Infinite
And churnedst them to Matter ; Space concentrated,
Great, glorious, everlasting. The Stars leaped and fled,
As hounds, in their young strength. Yet might they not
withdraw
From Thy hand's leash and bond. Thou chainedst them
with law.

They did not sin, those Stars, change face, wax proud, rebel.
Nay, they were slaves to Thee, things incorruptible.
I might not tempt them from Thee.

The Lord God. And the reason ?

Satan. Hear.

Thou gavest them no Mind, no sensual atmosphere,
Who wert Thyself their Soul. Though thou should drowse
for aye,
They should not swerve, nor flout Thee, nor abjure Thy way,
Not by a hair's breadth, Lord.

The Lord God. Thou witnessest for good.

Satan. I testify for truth. In all that solitude
Of spheres involved with spheres, of prodigal force set free,

There hath been no voice untrue, no tongue to disagree,
 No traitor thought to wound with less than perfect word.
 Such was Thy first Creation. I am Thy witness, Lord.
 'Twas worthy of Thyself.

The Lord God.

And of the second ?

Satan.

Stop.

How shall I speak of it unless Thou give me hope ;
 I who its child once was, though daring to rebel ;
 I who Thine outcast am, the banished thief of Hell,
 Thy too long reprobate ? Thou didst create to Thee
 A world of happy Spirits for Thy company,
 For Thy delight and solace, as being too weary grown
 Of Thy sole loneliness. 'Twas ill to be alone.
 And Thou didst make us pure, as Thou Thyself art pure.
 Yet was there seed of ill. What Spirit may endure
 The friction of the Spirit ? Where two are, Strife is.
 Thou gavest us Mind, Thought, Will ; all snares to happiness.

The Lord God. Unhappy blinded one ! How sinnedst thou ? Reveal.

Satan. Lord, through my too great love, through my excess of zeal.

Listen. Thy third Creation. . . .

The Lord God. Ha ! The Earth ? Speak plain.
 Now will I half forgive thee. What of the Earth, of men ?
 Was that not then the best, the noblest of the three ?

Satan. Ah, glorious Lord God ! Thou hadst Infinity
 From which to choose Thy plan. This plan, no less than
 those,

Was noble in conception, when its vision rose
 Before Thee in Thy dreams. Thou deemedst to endow
 Time with a great new wonder, wonderful as Thou,
 Matter made sensitive, informed with Life, with Soul.
 It grieved Thee the Stars knew not. Thou couldst not cajole
 Their music into tears, their beauty to full praise.

Thou askedst one made conscious of Thy works and ways,
One dowered with sense and passion, which should feel and
move

And weep with Thee and laugh, one that, alas, should love.
Thus didst Thou mould the Earth. We Spirits, wondering,
eyed

Thy new-born fleshly things, Thy Matter deified.
We saw the sea take life, its myriad forms all fair.
We saw the creeping things, the dragons of the air,
The birds, the four-foot beasts, all beautiful, all strong,
All brimming o'er with joyance, new green woods among,
Twice glorious in their lives. And we, who were but spirit,
Envied their lusty lot, their duplicated merit,
Their feet, their eyes, their wings, their physical desires,
The anger of their voices, the fierce sexual fires
Which lit their sentient limbs and joined them heart to
heart,

Their power to act, to feel, all that corporeal part
Which is the truth of love and giveth the breathing thing
The wonder of its beauty incarnate in Spring.
What was there, Lord, in Heaven comparable with this,
The mother beast with her young? Not even Thy
happiness,

Lord of the Universe! What beautiful, what bold,
What passionate as she? She doth not chide nor scold
When at her dugs he mumbleth. Nay, the milk she giveth
Is as a Sacrament, the power by which he liveth
A double life with hers. And they two in one day
Know more of perfect joy than we, poor Spirits, may
In our eternity of sober loneliness.

This was the thing we saw, and praised Thee and did bless.

The Lord God. Where then did the fault lie? Thou
witnessest again.

Was it because of Death, Life's complement,—or Pain,
That thou didst loose thy pride to question of My will?

Satan. Nay, Lord, Thou knowest the truth. These evils are not ill.

They do but prove Thy wisdom. All that lives must perish,
Else were the life at charge, the bodily fires they cherish,
Accumulating ills. The creatures Thou didst make
Sink when their day is done. They slough time like the
snake

How many hundred sunsets ? Yet night comes for rest,
And they awake no more,—and sleep,—and it is best.

What, Lord, would I not give to shift my cares and lie
Enfolded in Time's arms, stone-dead, eternally ?

No. 'Twas not Death, nor Pain ; Pain the true salt of
pleasure,

The condiment that stings and teaches each his measure,
The limit of his strength, joy's value in his hand.

It was not these we feared. We bowed to Thy command,

Even to that stern decree which bade the lion spring

Upon the weakling steer, the falcon bend her wing

To reive the laggard fowl, the monster of the deep

Devour and be devoured. He who hath sown shall reap.

And we beheld the Earth by that mute law controlled,

Grow ever young and new, Time's necklace of pure gold

Set on Creation's neck. We gazed, and we applauded

The splendour of Thy might, Thy incarnated Godhead.

And yet (Lord God, forgive. Nay, hear me) Thou wert
not

Content with this fair world in its first glorious thought :

Thou needs must make thee Man. Ah, there Thy wisdom
strayed.

Thou wantedst one to know Thee, no mere servile jade,

But a brave upright form to walk the Earth and be

Thy lieutenant with all and teach integrity,

One to aspire, adorn, to stand the roof and crown

Of thy Creation's house in full dominion,

The fairest, noblest, best of Thy created things ;

One Thou shouldst call Thy rose of all Time's blossomings.
 And Thou evolvedst Man !—There were a thousand forms,
 All glorious, all sublime, the riders of Thy storms,
 The battlers of Thy seas, the four-foot Lords of Earth,
 From which to choose Thy stem and get Thee a new birth.
 There were forms painted, proud, bright birds with plumes
 of heaven

And songs more sweet than angels' heard on the hills at even,
 Frail flashing butterflies, free fishes of such hue
 As rainbows hardly have, sleek serpents which renew
 Their glittering coats like gems, grave brindle-hided kine,
 Large-hearted elephants, the horse how near divine,
 The whale, the mastodon, the mighty Behemoth,
 Leviathan's self awake and glorious in his wrath.

All these Thou hadst for choice, competitors with Thee
 For Thy new gift and prize, Thy co-divinity.

Yet didst Thou choose, Lord God, the one comedian shape
 In Thy Creation's range, the lewd bare-buttocked ape,
 And calledst him, in scorn of all that brave parade,
 King of Thy living things, in Thine own likeness made !

Where, Lord, was then Thy wisdom ? We, who watched
 Thee, saw

More than Thyself didst see. We recognised the flaw,
 The certainty of fault, and I in zeal spake plain.

The Lord God. Thou didst, rebellious Spirit, and thy zeal
 was vain.

Thou spakest in thy blindness. Was it hard for God,
 Thinkest thou, to choose His graft, to wring from the worst
 clod

His noblest fruiting ? Nay. Man's baseness was the test,
 The text of His all-power, its proof made manifest.

There was nought hard for God.

Satan. Except to win Man's heart.

Lord, hear me to the end. Thy Will found counterpart
 Only in Man's un-Will. Thy Truth in his un-Truth,

Thy Beauty in his Baseness, Ruth in his un-Ruth,
Order in his dis-Order. See, Lord, what hath been
To Thy fair Earth through him, the fount and origin
Of all its temporal woes. How was it ere he came
In his high arrogance, sad creature without shame ?
Thou dost remember, Lord, the glorious World it was,
The beauty, the abundance, the unbroken face
Of undulent forest spread without or rent or seam
From mountain foot to mountain, one enbroidered hem
Fringing the mighty plains through which Thy rivers strayed,
Thy lakes, Thy floods, Thy marshes, tameless, unbetrayed,
All virgin of the spoiler, all inviolate,
In beauty undeflowered, where fear was not nor hate.
Thou knowest, Lord of all, how that sanct solitude
Was crowded with brave life, a thousand forms of good
Enjoying Thy sweet air, some strong, some weak, yet none
Oppressor of the rest more than Thy writ might run.
Armed were they, yet restrained. Not even the lion slew
His prey in wantonness, nor claimed beyond his due.
He thinned their ranks,—yet, lo, the Spring brought back
their joy.

Short was his anger, Lord. He raged not to destroy.
Oh, noble was the World, its balance held by Thee,
Timely its fruits for all, 'neath Thy sole sovereignty.
But he ! he, the unclean ! The fault, Lord God, was Thine.
Behold him in Thy place, a presence saturnine,
In stealth among the rest, equipped as none of these
With Thy mind's attributes, low crouched beneath the trees,
Betraying all and each. The wit Thou gavest him
He useth to undo, to bend them to his whim.
His bodily strength is little, slow of foot is he,
Of stature base, unclad in mail or panoply.
His heart hath a poor courage. He hath beauty none.
Bare to the buttocks he of all that might atone.
Without Thy favour, Lord, what power had he for ill ?

Without Thy prompting voice his violence had scant skill.
The snare, the sling, the lime, who taught him these but
Thou ?

The World was lost through Thee who fashioned him his bow.
And Thou hast clean forgot the fair great beasts of yore,
The mammoth, aurochs, elk, sea-lion, cave-bear, boar,
Which fell before his hand, each one of them than he
Nobler and mightier far, undone by treachery.
He spared them not, old, young, calf, cow. With pitfall hid
In their mid path they fell, by his guile harvested,
And with them the World's truth. Henceforth all walked
in fear,

Knowing that one there was turned traitor, haply near.
This was the wild man's crime.

The Lord God.

He erred in ignorance.

As yet he was not Man. Naught but his form was Man's.

Satan. Well had he so remained. Lord God, Thou
thoughtest then

To perfect him by grace, among the sons of men
To choose a worthiest man. "If he should know," saidst
Thou

"The evil from the good, the thing We do allow
From that We do forbid ! If We should give him shame,
The consciousness of wrong, the red blush under blame !
If he should walk in light beholding truth as We !"
Thou gavest him Conscience, Creed, Responsibility,
The power to worship Thee. Thou showedst him Thy way.
Thou didst reveal Thyself. Thou spakest, as one should say
Conversing mouth to mouth. Old Adam and his Eve
Thou didst array in aprons Thy own hands did weave.
Enoch was taken up. To Noah Thou didst send
Salvation in Thine ark. Lord Abraham was Thy friend.
These are the facts recorded, facts (say fables) yet
Impressed with the large truth of a new value set
Upon Man's race and kind by Thy too favouring will.

Man had become a Soul, informed for good and ill
 With Thy best attributes, Earth's moral arbiter,
 Tyrant and priest and judge. Woe and alas for her !
 Think of the deeds of Man ! the sins ! No wilding now,
 But set in cities proud, yet marked upon his brow
 With label of all crime.

The Lord God.

The men before the Flood ?

We did destroy them all.

Satan.

Save Noah and his brood.

In what were these more worthy ? Did they love Thee
 more,

The men of the new lineage ? Was their sin less sore,
 Their service of more zeal ? Nay. Earth was hardly dry
 Ere their corruption stank and their sin sulphurously
 Rose as a smoke to Heaven, Ur, Babel, Nineveh,
 The Cities of the Plain. Bethink Thee, Lord, to-day
 What their debasement was, who did defile Thy face
 And flout Thee in derision, dogs in shamelessness !

The Lord God. Nay, but there loved Me one.

Satan.

The son of Terah ?

The Lord God.

He.

Satan. I give Thee Thy one friend. Nay, more, I give
 Thee three—

Moses, Melchisedec.

The Lord God.

And Job.

Satan.

Ay, Job. He stands

In light of the new Gospel, Captain of Thy bands,
 And prince of all that served Thee, fearing not to find
 Thy justice even in wrong with no new life behind,
 Thy justice even in death. In all, four men of good
 Of the whole race of Shem, Heaven's stars in multitude.
 (I speak of the old time and the one chosen Nation
 To whom Thou gavest the law.)

The Lord God.

Truce to that dispensation.

It was an old-world hope, made void by Jacob's guile.

His was a bitter stem. We bore with it awhile,
Too long, till We grew weary. But enough. 'Tis done.
What sayest thou of the new, most wise Apollyon ?

Satan. Ah, Lord, wilt Thou believe me ? That was a
mighty dream,

Sublime, of a world won by Thy Son's stratagem
Of being Himself a Man—the rueful outcast thing !
And of all men a Jew ! for poor Earth's ransoming.
Thrice glorious inspiration ! Who but He had dared
Come naked, as He came, of all His kingship bared,
Not one of us to serve Him, neither praised nor proud
But just as the least are, the last ones of the crowd.
He had not Man's fierce eye. No beast fell back abashed
To meet Him in the woods, as though a flame had flashed.
He lay down with the foxes. The quails went and came
Between His feet asleep. They did not fear His blame.
He had not Man's hard heart. He had not Man's false hand.
His gesture was as theirs. Their wit could understand
He was their fellow flesh. To Him, so near to God,
What difference lay 'twixt Man and the least herb He trod ?
He came to save them *all*, to win *all* to His peace.
What cared He for Man, Jew, more than the least of these ?
And yet He loved His kind, the sick at heart, the poor,
The impotent of will, those who from wrong forbore,
Those without arms to strike, the lost of Israel.
Of these He made His kingdom—as it pleased Him well—
Kingdom without a king. His thought was to bring back
Earth to its earlier way, ere Man had left the track,
And stay his rage to slay. “ Take ye no thought,” said He,
“ Of what the day may bring. Be as the lilies be.
They toil not, nor do spin, and yet are clothed withal.
Choose ye the lowest place. Be guileless of all gall.
If one shall smite you, smile. If one shall rob, give more.
The first shall be the last, and each soul hold its store.
Only the eyes that weep—only the poor in spirit—

Only the pure in heart God's kingdom shall inherit."
 On this fair base of love Thy Son built up His creed,
 Thinking to save the world. And Man, who owned no need
 Of any saving, slew Him.

The Lord God. It was the Jews that slew
 In huge ingratitude Him who Himself was Jew.
 O perfidi Judaei! Yet His creed prevailed.
 Thou hast thyself borne witness. If Shem's virtue failed,
 Japhet hath found us sons who swear all by His name.
 Nay, thou hast testified the Christian faith finds fame
 In every western land. It hath inherited
 All that was once called Rome. The Orient bows its head
 Perturbed by the white vision of a purer day.
 Ham's heritage accepts new salves for its decay,
 And there are worlds reborn beyond the ocean's verge
 Where men are not as men, mad foam on the salt surge,
 But live even as He taught them in love's noblest mood,
 Under the law of Jesus.

Satan. Where, O glorious God?
 In what land of the heathen—and I know them all,
 From China to Peru, from Hind to Senegal,
 And onward through the isles of the great Southern main.
 Where is this miracle? Nay, nay, the search were vain.

The Lord God. It is the angels' hearsay.

Satan. A romance, Lord. Hear
 The word of one Thy wanderer, sphere and hemisphere,
 For ever on Thy Earth, who, shepherding Thy seas
 No less than Thy green valleys, hath nor rest nor peace,
 But he must learn the way of all who in them dwell;
 To whom there is no secret, naught untold, no Hell
 Where any sin may hide but he hath wormed it out
 From silence to confession till his ears grew hot;
 Who knoweth the race of Man as his own flesh; whose eye
 Is cruel to evasion and the lips that lie,
 And who would tell Thee all, all, all to the last act

Of tragic fooling proved which seals Man's counterpact.
—What was the true tale, think Thee, of Thy Son that died ?
What of the souls that knew Him, Him the crucified,
After their Lord was gone ? They waited for Him long,
The sick He had made whole, the wronged consoled of wrong,
The women He had loved, the fisher folk whose ears
Had drunk in His word's wisdom those three wondrous years,
And deemed Him prophet, prince, His kingdom yet to come,
Nay from the grave new-risen and had been seen of some.
What did they teach ? Awhile, they told His law of peace,
His rule of unresistance and sweet guilelessness,
His truce with mother Earth, His abstinence from toil,
His love of the least life that wanton hands despoil,
The glory of His tears, His watching, fasting, prayer,
The patience of His death, His last word of despair.
And as He lived they lived—awhile—expectant still
Of His return in power to balance the Earth's ill.
They would not deem Him dead. But, when He came not, lo,
Their reason went astray. Poor souls, they loved Him so,
They had such grief for Him, their one true God in Man
Revealed to their sad eyes in all a World grown wan,
That they must build a creed, a refuge from their fears
In His remembered words and so assuage their tears.
His kingdom ? It was what ? Not all a dream ? Forbid
That fault, that failure, Heaven, for such were death indeed.
His promises of peace, goodwill on earth to men,
Which needed a fulfilment, lest faith fail ? How then
Since no fulfilment came, since He had left them lone
In face of the world's wolves, for bread had given a stone ?
How reconcile His word with that which was their life,
Man's hatred and God's silence in a world of strife ?
Was there no path, no way ? Nay, none on this sad Earth
Save with their Lord to suffer and account it mirth.
And so awhile they grieved. Then rose a subtlety.
(Lord God, Thou knowest not wholly how men crave to lie

In face of a hard truth too grievous to their pride.)
To these poor fisher folk, thus of their Lord denied,
Came a new blinding vision. They had seen Thy Son
How often after death, no ghost, no carrion,
But a plain man alive, who moved among them slow,
And showed His feet and hands, the thorn prints on His
brow,
The spear wound in His side. He had come to comfort
them,
Confirm them in the faith, by His love's stratagem.
How if this thing were real? if this, that proved Him God,
Proved also themselves spirits, not mere flesh and blood
One with the beasts that perish, but immortal souls,
Even as we angels are who fill Heaven's muster rolls
And so shall live for aye? "Here," argued they, "it stands
The kingdom of His Heaven, a house not made with hands,
Wherein we too new-born, but in no earthly case,
Shall enter after death." On this fair fragile base
Their sorrow built its nest. It gave a hope to men
And pandered to their pride. And lo the world's disdain
Was changed to acclamation. Kings and emperors kneeled
Before the Crucified, a living God revealed,
Who made them heirs with Him of His own glory. (Mark
The ennobling phrase and title.) No base Noah's ark
Man's fount of honour now, but God's eternal choice
Made of His human race, predestined to His joys
From the first dawn of time,—the very Universe
Resolved to a mere potsherd, shattered to rehearse
The splendour of Man's advent, the one act and end
To which Creation moved, and where even we must tend,
The spirit hosts of Heaven! Stark mad insolence!
Rank blasphemy proclaimed in Rome's halls and Byzance,
Through all the Imperial lands, as though, forsooth, Thou,
Lord,
Couldst, even if Thou wouldst, raise this fantastic horde

Satan. Or Heaven. Forgive it, Lord,
I spoke it in my haste. See, I withdraw the word.
Thy Christendom is wise, reformed. None buy nor sell

Or Heaven. Forgive it, Lord,

I spoke it in my haste. See, I withdraw the word.

Thy Christendom is wise, reformed. None buy nor sell

Seats now at Thy right hand ; (*aside*) grown quite unsaleable.
None now believe nor tremble. Yet is their sin as sore.
(Lord, hear me to the end.) Thou dravest me out of yore
An exile from Thy sight, with mission to undo
And tempt Man to his death. I had fallen from Heaven's
blue

By reason of my pride. Thou wouldst have service done
Unreasoning, on the knees, as flowers bend to the Sun,
Which withers them at noon, nor ask of his white fires
Why they consume and slay. I had fallen by my desires
Which were too large for one not God, because I would
Have shown Thee the truth bare, in no similitude
As a slave flattering speaks and half despises him
He fawns on, but in love, which stands erect of limb
Claiming an equal part, which reasons, questions, dares,
And calls all by its name, the wheat wheat, the tares tares,
The friend friend, the foe foe. Thou wast displeased at this,
And deemed I envied Man his portion in Thy bliss,
The Man that Thou hadst made and in Thy royal faith
Held worthy of all trust, Thy lord of life and death,
One to be proved and tried, as gold is tried by fire,
And fare the purer forth. Of me Thou didst require
The sad task of his tempting. I, forsooth, must sue
And prompt to evil deeds, make the false thought seem true,
The true thought false, that he, thus proved, thus tried,
might turn

And hurl me a dog's word, as Jesus did, in scorn :
" Get thee behind Me, Satan ! " To this penance chained
I bowed me in despair, as Thou, Lord, hadst ordained,
Cast out from Thee and cursed. It was a rueful task
For one who had known *Thee* to wear the felon's mask
And tempt this piteous child to his base sins of greed,
His lusts ignoble, crimes how prompt in act and deed,
To urge him to rebellion against God and good
Who needed none to urge. His savage simian blood

Flamed at a word, a sign. He lied, he thieved, he slew,
By instinct of his birth. No virtue but he knew
Its countervice and foil, without my wit to aid.
No fair thought but he chose the foul thought in its stead.
Ah, sad primæval race ! Thou saidst it was not Man
This thing armed with the stone which through thy forests
ran,

Intent to snare and slay. Not Man the senseless knave
Who struck fire from his flint to burn Thy gorses brave,
Thy heaths for his lean kine, who, being the one unclean,
Defiled thy flower-sweet Earth with ordure heaps obscene
To plant his rice, his rye. Not Man, saidst Thou, because
He knew not of Thy way nor had he learned Thy laws,
And was stark savage still. Not Man ? Behold to-day
Thy tamed Man as he lives, Thy Son of Japhet, nay
Thy new true-Christened King, the follower of Thy Christ,
Who sweareth by Thy name and his own mailed fist
That Thou art Lord of all and he the Lord of Thee,
Heaven's instrument ordained to teach integrity.
Thinkest Thou the *man* is changed, the *ape* that in him is,
Because his limbs are clothed which went in shamelessness ?
Are his lusts bridled more because his parts are hid ?
Nay, Lord, he doeth to-day as those forefathers did,
Only in greater guile. I will tell Thee his full worth,
This Man's, the latest born, Thy creature from his birth
Who lords it now, a king, this white Man's who hath pressed
All Earth to his sole bondage and supreme behest,
This Man of all Mankind. Behold him in Thy place,
Administering the World, vicegerent of Thy grace
And agent named of Thee, the symbol and the sign
Of Thy high will on Earth and purposing divine,
Clothed in his robes of power. Whence was he ? What
is he

That he asserteth thus his hand's supremacy ?
His lineage what ? Nay, Lord, he cometh of that mad stem

Harder in act than Ham's, more subtle than of Shem,
 The red Japhetic stock of the bare plains which rolled
 A base-born horde on Rome erewhile in lust of gold,
 Tide following tide, the Goth, Gaul, Vandal, Lombard, Hun,
 Spewed forth from the white North to new dominion
 In the fair southern lands, with famine at their heel
 And rapine in their van, armed to the lips with steel.
 These made their spoil of all, the pomp of the world's power,
 Its wealth, its beauty stored, all Rome's imperial dower,
 Her long renown, her skill, her art, her cultured fame,
 And with the rest her faiths bearing the Christian name.
 From this wild bitter root of violent lust and greed
 New Christendom upsprang, a pagan blood-stained creed,
 Pagan in spite of Christ, for the old gods cast down
 Still ruled it in men's hearts and lured them to renown,
 Ay in Thy name, Lord God, by glamour of the sword,
 And for Thy dead Son's sake, as in the days abhorred.
 Like bulls they strove, they slew, like wolves they seized the
 prey,

The hungriest strongest first, and who should say them nay ?
 After the Goth the Gaul, after the Gaul the Dane,
 Kings in descent from Thor, peace sued to them in vain.
 Thou knowest, Lord God, their story. It is writ in blood,
 The blood of beast and man, by their brute hands subdued,
 Down to the latest born, the hungriest of the pack,
 The master wolf of all, men call the Sassenach,
 The Anglo-Norman dog, who goeth by land and sea
 As his forefathers went in chartered piracy,
 Death, fire in his right hand.

The Lord God.

Satan, once more beware.

Thy tongue hath a wide license, yet it runneth far.
 This Anglo-Saxon man hath a fair name with some.
 He standeth in brave repute, a priest of Christendom,
 First in civility, so say the Angel host,
 Who speak of him with awe as one that merits most.

Satan. The Angels fear him, Lord.

The Lord God.

How fear ?

Satan.

They fear his tongue,

Unscrupulous to speak, the right he hath in wrong,
The wrong he hath in right. They doubt he hath Thine ear,
Lord of the Universe. They are excused of fear.

They see his long success, his victory over good,
They count the nations lost which were of kindlier blood
But could not stand before him, his great subtlety,
His skill in the arts, the crafts. They mark the powers
that be

In earth, air, water, fire, all banded in his plan
And used to the world's hurt as never yet by Man.
They look on Thee, Lord God, as one that careth not,
On him as Thy supplanter and the iron as hot
Which shall reforge the chain by which the Earth is bound.
They fear to awaken Thee from Thy long sleep profound.
He hath become their God, one impious and profane,
But strong and unreproved, ascendant on Thy wane.
They kneel to the new-comer as all courtiers use
Who fear a change of king. Their news is an ill news.
Nay, Lord, 'tis but a lie. I know it well, their story.
'Tis but the man's own boast, his mouthings of vain glory
Repeated day by day with long reiterate stress,
Till the world half believes in sheer ear-weariness,
And they, who think to please, retail it as their own.
What say they of him, Lord ? That he hath one God alone,
Is not as the lewd nations, keepeth Thy Sabbath holy,
Nor Thy name vainly taketh in the ways of folly,
Hath a wise polity, his Church and State close blent,
A lordly bench of bishops, peers of Parliament,
A Convocation House which yearly witnesseth,
A King by grace of God, Defender of the Faith,
Thy ten commandments set in all his Courts of Law.
They show his fanes restored by highway, hedge and shaw,

His missions to the Jews, his Church societies,
The zeal of his free sects, each than the rest more wise,
The wealth of his chief priests, his weekly public prayer,
Things proving him devout more than the nations are.
They cite his worldly worth, his virtue these beyond,
His high repute in trade, his word held as his bond,
The valour of his dealings, his long boast of truth,
The prudent continence of his unwedded youth,
Uxorious faith in marriage, husband of one wife,
Nor taking her next sister to his widowed life.
These tales they hear and bring, some true, some false, but all
Of the common Saxon brag for first original.
So too of his world-science, social schemes, reforms,
His school-boards, gaols new systemed, signalling of storms,
Posts, railways, Homes for orphans, Charities organised,
His Mansion House funds floated, alms economised,
His hospitals, museums, baths, parks, workhouses,
And that last glorious marvel, his free Daily Press.
A wonderful Saxon truly, each day interviewed
By his own wondering self and found exceeding good.
All this and more they cite. That he hath virtues, well,
Let it be granted him. Those pay who most would sell,
And more who most would buy. Alms to his credit stand
In his account with time, and add strength to his hand,
Serving his best advantage in the enlarged domain
Of his Man's selfishness, which works for the World's bane
More surely than his vices. He hath outlived the day
Of the old single graspings, where each went his way
Alone to plunder all. He hath learned to curb his lusts
Somewhat, to smooth his brawls, to guide his passionate
gusts,
His cry of "mine, mine, mine" in inarticulate wrath.
He dareth not make raid on goods his next friend hath
With open violence, nor loose his hand to steal,
Save in community and for the common weal

'Twixt Saxon man and man. He is more congruous grown,
Holding a subtler plan to make the world his own
By organised self-seeking in the paths of power.
He is new drilled to wait. He knoweth his appointed hour
And his appointed prey. Of all he maketh tool,
Even of his own sad virtues, to cajole and rule,
Even of Thee, Lord God.—I will expound this thing,
The creed of these white thieves which boast of Thee, their
King,

As partner in their crimes. The head knaves of the horde,
Those who inspire the rest and give the masterword,
The leaders of their thought, their lords political,
Sages, kings, poets, priests, in their hearts one and all
(For all their faith avowed and their lip service done
In face of Thy high fires each day beneath the sun),
Ay, and their prelates too, their men of godliest worth,
Believe no word of Thee as Master of their Earth,
Controller of their acts, no word of Thy high right
To bend men to obedience and at need to smite,
No word of Thy true law, the enforcement of Thy peace,
Thy all-deciding arm in the world's policies.
They ignore Thee on the Earth. They grant Thee, as their
“God,”

The kingdom of the heavens, seeing it a realm untrod,
Untreadable by man, a space, a *res nullius*
Or No-Man's Land, which they as loyal men and pious
Leave and assign to Thee to deal with as Thou wilt,
To hold as Thy strong throne or loose as water spilt
For sun and wind to gather in the wastes of air.
Whether of a truth Thou *art* they know not, Lord, nor care ;
Only they name Thee “God,” and pay Thee their prayers
vain,

As dormant over-lord and pensioned suzerain,
The mediatised blind monarch of a world, outgrown
Of its faith's swaddling-clothes, which wills to walk alone,

The Earth? Not so. 'Tis theirs, the prize of the strong hand,
The strongest being their own by sea alike and land.

"Thy Will be done," they cry, "Father which art in
Heaven"

(Where Thou canst harm nor hurt not one day in the seven).
And if they add "on Earth" they deem Thee impotent,
Seeing Thee drowse thus long and leave men to their bent.
They mean "Thy Will in Heaven," or in their "World to
come."

"Terram autem dedit filiis hominum."

So think their chiefs, their lords. For the blind mass of
men,

Which live and toil and die heart-hungry in their pen,
They have no god but gold, the lord of their distress,
And gold's slave, drink, that buys a night's forgetfulness.
Of Thee they have no heed to chide them or to cheer.
The fear of Thee with these is their law's officer.
Lord God, if Thou but saw the pagan hearts they hide,
The base greeds of their being, the lusts undenied,
The Mammons that they worship! But Thou dost not see,
Or Thou hadst purged long since this worst profanity
From the World's better way and thereby saved Thy
name

Profaned in their foul mouths from its long daily shame.
Thou dost not hear, nor see. The smoke of their foul dens
Broodeth on Thy fair Earth as a black pestilence,
Hiding the kind day's eye. No flower, no grass there
groweth,

Only their engines' dung which the fierce furnace throweth.
Their presence poisoneth all and maketh all unclean.
Thy streams they have made sewers for their dyes aniline.
No fish therein may swim, no frog, no worm may crawl,
No snail for grime may build her house within their wall.
Thy beasts they have enslaved in blindness underground.
The voice of birds that sang to them is a lost sound.

Nay, they have tarred Time's features, pock-marked
Nature's face,

Brought all to the same jakes with their own lack of grace.

In all Thy living World there is no sentient thing

Polluteth and defileth as this Saxon king,

This intellectual lord and sage of the new quest,

The only wanton he that fouleth his own nest.

And still his boast goeth forth. Nay, Lord, 'tis shame to

Thee

This slave, being what he is, should ape divinity,

The poorest saddest drudge, the least joy-lifted heart

In all a World where tears are sold in open mart,

That he should stand, Thy choice, to preach Thy law, and

set

His impress on the Earth in full apostolate,

Thy missionary and priest. He goeth among the nations,

Saith he, to spread Thy truth, to preach Thy law of patience,

To glorify Thy name ! Not selfishly, forsooth,

But for their own more good, to open them the truth,

To teach them happiness, to civilise, to save,

To smite down the oppressor and make free the slave.

To bear the " White Man's Burden," which he yearns to take

On his white Saxon back for his white conscience' sake.

Huge impudent imposture !—Lord, there were fair lands

Once on Thy Earth, brave hills, bright isles, sweet coral

strands,

Noble savannahs, plains of limitless waving green,

Lakes girt with giant forests, continents unseen,

Unknown by these white thieves, where men lived in the

way

Of Thy good natural law with Thy free beasts at play

And partners with Thy birds, men who nor toiled nor span,

Nor sowed, nor reaped, nor delved for the red curse of Man,

The gold that kills the soul; who knew nought of the fire

Which in his guns he storeth, naught of the desire

More deadly still concealed in his fire-drink of death ;
 Who went unclothed, unshamed, for garment a flower
 wreath ;

Whose women lived unsold and loved their natural kin,
 Nor gave aught to the stranger in the wage of sin ;
 Who blessed Thee for their babes and through the woods,
 like Eve,

Wandered in happy laughter, glorying to conceive.
 Yea, Lord, and there were others,—shut communities
 Of souls still on Thy path and strange to the new lies,
 Yet not, as these were, wild, but held in discipline
 Of orderly commandment, servants true of Thine
 And doers of Thy law, though ignorant, untaught
 Save by an inward grace of self-restraining thought
 And light intuitive. No shedders they of blood,
 But with all creatures friends, with men in brotherhood,
 Blameless of wine, of strife ; in innocent arts well skilled
 But schoolless of all guile as an unchristened child.
 To these with mouthings fine come the white gossellers,
 Our Saxon mission-men black-coated to the ears.
 —“ Which be your gods ? ” ask they ; “ Do ye adore the
 Christ ?

Know ye the Three in One, or walk ye in the mist ? ”

“ Sirs, we have One, not Three. Our poor ancestral wit
 Encompasseth no more.” “ Then be ye damned for it.

This is our Bible, read. In the long after-death
 Ye shall be burned with fire. It is God’s self that saith.”

“ We do not live again.” “ In this life, ye shall live
 According to our gospel, nor profanely wive
 Save with one spouse alone.” “ Our law hath given us
 three.

Three Gods to one sole wife were multiplicity.”

“ These pagans are blasphemers ! Who is on our side ?

See, we have gold to give. We may not be denied.”—

And they baptize them Christians. Cometh the trader next,

His bible too in hand, its free-trade for his text.
He teacheth them to buy.—“ We nothing need.” “ Yet
take.

The want will come anon and keep your wits awake.
Here are the goods we sell, cloth, firelocks, powder, rum,
Ye shall go clothed like lords, like kings of Christendom.”
“ We live best naked.” “ Fie.” “ We have no use for
arms.

The fire-drink is forbid.” “ The thing forbid hath charms.
Nay. We will make you men, soldiers to brawl and fight
As all good Christians use, and God defend the right.
The drink will give you courage. Take it. ’Tis the sign
Of manhood orthodox, its sacramental wine,
Or how can you be worthy your new Christian creed ?
Drink.”—And they drink to Jesus and are borne to bed.
He teacheth them to sell.—“ We need coin for our draught.
How shall we bring the price, since ye give naught for
naught ?

We crave the fire-drink now.” “ Friends, let not that
prevent.

We lend on all your harvests, take our cent per cent.”
“ Sirs, but the crop is gone.” “ There is your land in lots.”
“ The land ? It was our fathers’.” “ Curse ye for idle sots,
A rascal lazing pack. Have ye no hands to work ?
Off to the mines and dig, and see it how ye shirk.”

“ As slaves ? ” “ No, not as *slaves*. Our principles forbid.
Free labourers, if you will. We use that word instead.
The ‘ dignity of labour ’ ye shall learn for hire.
No paltering. No excuse. The white man hates a liar,
And hates a grumbling hand. Enough if we provide
Tools with the drink and leave your backs with a whole
hide.

These lands are ours by Charter. If you doubt it, bring
Your case before the Courts, which will expound the thing.
As for your women folk. Look, there are ways well known

All women have of living in a Christian town.
 Moreover you do ill. One wife the law allows,
 And you, you say, have four. Send three round to our
 house."

—Thus is Thy gospel preached. Its issue, Lord, behold
 In the five Continents, the new world and the old,
 The happier tribes of Man despoiled, enslaved, betrayed
 To the sole white Man's lust, husband and wife and maid,
 Their laughter drowned in tears, their kindness in mad
 wrath,

Their dignity of joy in a foul trance of death,
 Till at the last they turn and in their anguish rend.
 Then loud the cry goeth forth, the white man's to each
 friend :

"Help! Christians, to our help! These black fiends
 murder us."

And the last scene is played in death's red charnel house.
 The Saxon anger flames. His ships in armament
 Bear slaughter on their wings. The Earth with fire is rent,
 And the poor souls misused are wiped from the world's face
 In one huge imprecation from the Saxon race,
 In one huge burst of prayer and insolent praise to Thee,
 Lord God, for Thy high help and proved complicity.
 Nay Lord, 'tis not a lie, the thing I tell Thee thus.
 Their bishops in their Churches lead, incredulous,
 The public thanks profane. They sanctify the sword :

"Te Deum laudamus. Give peace in our time, O Lord."
 Hast Thou not heard their chaunting? Nay, Thou dost not
 hear,

Or Thou hadst loosed Thy hand like lightning in the clear
 To smite their ribald lips with palsy, these false priests,
 These Lords who boast Thine aid at their high civic feasts,
 The ignoble shouting crowds, the prophets of their Press,
 Pouring their daily flood of bald self-righteousness,
 Their poets who write big of the "White Burden." Trash!

The White Man's Burden, Lord, is the burden of his cash.
 —There! Thou hast heard the truth. Thy world, Lord
 God of Heaven,
 Lieth in the hands of thieves who pillage morn and even.
 And Thou still sleepest on! Nay but Thou needs must hear
 Or abdicate Thy name of High Justiciar
 Henceforward and for ever. It o'erwhelmeth Thee
 With more than temporal shame. Thy silence is a Sea
 Crying through all the spheres in pain and ceasing not
 As blood from out the ground to mark crime's murder spot :
 " There is no hope—no truth. He hath betrayed the trust.
 The Lord God is unjust. The Lord God is unjust."

[*A cry without.*

This is their cry in Heaven who give Thee service true.
 Arise, Lord, and avenge as was Thy wont to do.

[*The Angels re-enter in disorder, weeping.*

The Lord God. What tears be these, my Sons? What ails
 ye that ye weep?

Speak, Shepherds of the flock! Ye that have cared my
 sheep!

Ye that are charged with Man! Is it as this One saith?
 Is Satan then no liar who loudly witnesseth
 Man's ruin of the World?

The Angel of Pity (coming forward). Lord, it is even so.
 Thy Earth is a lost force, Man's lazarus-house of woe,
 Undone by his lewd will. We may no longer strive.
 The evil hath prevailed. There is no soul alive
 That shall escape his greed. We spend our days in tears
 Mourning Thy world's lost beauty in the night of years.
 All pity is departed. Each once happy thing
 That on Thy fair Earth went, how fleet of foot or wing,
 How glorious in its strength, how wondrous in design,
 How royal in its raiment tintured opaline,
 How rich in joyous life, the inheritor of forms
 All noble, all of worth, which had survived the storms,

The chances of decay in the World's living plan
From the remote fair past when still ignoble Man
On his four foot-soles went and howled through the lone hills
In moody bestial wrath, unclassed among Earth's ills :
Each one of them is doomed. From the deep Central Seas
To the white Poles, Man ruleth pitiless Lord of these,
And daily he destroyeth. The great whales he driveth
Beneath the northern ice, and quarter none he giveth,
Who perish there of wounds in their huge agony.
He presseth the white bear on the white frozen sea
And slaughtereth for his pastime. The wise amorous seal
He flayeth big with young ; the walrus cubs that kneel
But cannot turn his rage, alive he manglenth them,
Leaveth in breathing heaps, outrooted branch and stem.
In every land he slayeth. He hath new engines made
Which no life may withstand, nor in the forest shade
Nor in the sunlit plain, which wound all from afar,
The timorous with the valiant, waging his false war,
Coward, himself unseen. In pity, Lord, look down
On the blank widowed plains which he hath made his own
By right of solitude. Where, Lord God, are they now,
Thy glorious bison herds, Thy ariels white as snow,
Thy antelopes in troops, the zebras of Thy plain ?
Behold their whitened bones on the dull track of men.
Thy elephants, Lord, where ? For ages thou didst build
Their frames' capacity, the hide which was their shield
No thorn might pierce, no sting, no violent tooth assail,
The tusks which were their levers, the lithe trunk their flail.
Thou strengthenedst their deep brain. Thou madest them
wise to know
And wiser to ignore, advised, deliberate, slow,
Conscious of power supreme in right. The manifest token
Of Thy high will on earth, Thy natural peace unbroken,
Unbreakable by fear. For ages did they move
Thus, kings of Thy deep forest swayed by only love.

Where are they now, Lord God ? A fugitive spent few
 Used as Man's living targets by the ignoble crew
 Who boast their coward skill to plant the balls that fly,
 Thy work of all time spoiled, their only use to die
 That these sad clowns may laugh. Nay, Lord, we weep
 for *Thee*,

And spend ourselves in tears for Thy marred majesty.
 Behold, Lord, what we bring—this last proof in our hands,
 Their latest fiendliest spoil from Thy fair tropic lands,
 The birds of all the Earth unwinged to deck the heads
 Of their unseemly women ; plumage of such reds
 As not the sunset hath, such purples as no throne,
 Not even in heaven, showeth (hardly, Lord, Thine own),
 Such azures as the sea's, such greens as are in Spring
 The oak trees' tenderest buds of watched-for blossoming,
 Such opalescent pearls as only in Thy skies
 The lunar bow revealeth to night's sleep-tired eyes.
 Behold them, Lord of Beauty, Lord of Reverence,
 Lord of Compassion, Thou who metest means to ends,
 Nor madest Thy world fair for less than Thine own fame,
 Behold Thy birds of joy lost, tortured, put to shame
 For these vile strumpets' whim ! Arise, or cease to be
 Judge of the quick and dead ! These dead wings cry to
 Thee !

Arise, Lord, and avenge !

The Angels.

We wait upon Thy word.

[*The LORD GOD covereth His face.*

Satan. Thou hearest them, Lord God.

The Lord God.

Good Satan, I have heard.

Thou art more just than I—alas, more just than I.

The Angels. Behold the Lord God weepeth.

The Angel of Pity.

What eyes should be dry

If for a crime eyes weep ? This crime transcendeth crime.

And the Lord God hath pity.

Satan.

In His own good time.

The Lord God. Alas, the time is late. I do repent Me
sore

The wrong I did thee, Satan, in those griefs of yore,
The wrong I did the Earth. Yet is Eternity
A long day for atonement. Thou thyself shalt be
My instrument here of wrath to purge this race of Man
And cast him on Time's dunghill, whence he first began.
What, Angel, is thy counsel ? Shall we unseal again
The fountains of the heavens, send our outpoured rain,
And flood him with new waters ? Shall it be by fire ?
Shall we embraize the earth in one vast funeral pyre
By impact of a star ? Let loose a sulphurous wind ?
Belch rocks from the Earth's bowels ? Shall we strike Man
blind

With an unbearable light ? Shall we so shake the hills,
The plains, that he fall palsied, grind him in the mills
Of a perpetual hail, importune him with snow,
Scourge him with noise unceasing, or the glutinous flow
Of a long pestilent stench ? Speak, Satan, all thy thought,
Thou who the traitor knowest. How may he be brought
Best to annihilation ?

Satan. Lord, by none of these,
Thy floods, Thy flames, Thy storms were puerilities.
He hath too large a cunning to be taken thus.
He would outride Thy waves, outblast Thy sulphurous
Winds with his counter-winds. He liveth on foul air
As on the breath of heaven. He hath nor thought nor
care

For Thy worst lightning strokes, holding their principle
Rock-firm in his own hand. All natural powers fulfil
His brain's omnipotence. He standeth at each point
Armed for defiant war in harness without joint.
Though Thou shouldst break the Earth in twain he should
not bend.

Thou needest a force to aid Thee, an ally, a friend,

A principle of good which shall outwit his guile
 With true white guilelessness, his anger with a smile,
 His force with utter weakness. Only thus, Lord God,
 Shalt Thou regain Thy Earth, a purified abode,
 And rid it of the Human.

The Lord God. And the means ? Thy plan
 Needeth a new redemption.

Satan. Ay, but not of Man.
 He is beyond redeeming, or Thy Son had died
 Not wholly to this loss. Who would be crucified
 To-day must choose another, a young fleshly form,
 Free from the simian taint, were it but flower or worm,
 Or limpet of the rock, or grieving nightingale,
 Wherein to preach his gospel. Yet should he prevail,
 If only for truth's sake and that this latest lie
 Should be laid bare to shame, Time's fraud, Humanity.
 Choose Thee an Angel, Lord ; it were enough. Thy Son
 Was a price all too great even had the world been won.
 Nor can it be again. An Angel shall suffice
 For Thy new second sending, so Thou guide the choice
 To a more reasoned issue—so Thou leave Mankind
 Henceforth to his sole ways as at his outset, blind
 To all but his own lusts, untutored by Thy grace.
 This is the road, Lord God. I bow before Thy face.
 I make Thee my submission to do all Thy will,
 So Thou absolve and pardon.

The Lord God. O incomparable
 Good servant, Satan ! Thou art absolved indeed.
 It was *thy* right to pardon thy God's lack of heed,
 His wrath at thy wise counsel. Nay, thou shamest Me.
 Be thou absolved, good Angel, Ego absolvo te
 Ab omnibus peccatis. Once more be it thy right
 To stand before God's throne for ever in His sight,
 And trusted more than these. Speak, Satan, what thou
 wilt,

All shall be granted thee, the glory with the guilt
 Of the Earth lost and won. Who is it thou wouldst send
 Agent and messenger to work to this new end?
 What Angel of them all? I pledge thee My full faith
 It shall be as thou wilt.

Satan. Who goeth must die the death,
 Since death is all life's law, and taste of corporal pain.
 And whoso dieth must die, nor think to live again.

The Lord God. Shall it be Michael? Speak.

Satan. Nay, Lord, nor Gabriel.
 They are Thy servants tried, who love Thy Heaven too well.
 Thou shalt not drive them forth to the wild wastes of Earth.
 What should they do, Lord God, with a terrestrial birth,
 With less than Thy long joys? Nay, rather choose Thee
 one

Already marred with grief with Time's disunion,
 One all too sad for Heaven, to whom Eternity
 Is as a charge o'erspent, who hath no fear to die,
 But gladly would lie down and be for aye no more,
 The flotsam of Time's waves upon Death's outer shore,
 Forgotten and forgetting. Grant me, Lord God, this,
 In penance for the past, Death's full forgetfulness.

The Lord God. And thou wouldst be incarnate?

Satan. As the least strong thing,
 The frailest, the most fond, an insect on the wing,
 Which shall prevail by love, by ignorance, by lack
 Of all that Man most trusteth to secure his back,
 To arm his hand with might. What Thy Son dreamed of
 Man

Will I work out anew as some poor cateran,
 The weakest of the Earth, with only beauty's power
 And Thy good grace to aid, the creature of an hour
 Too fugitive for fight, too frail even far to fly,
 And at the hour's end, Lord, to close my wings and die.
 Such were the new redemption.

The Lord God. Thou good angel ! Nay,
The World were all unworthy such high price to pay.
I will not have thee die.

Satan. 'Tis not for the World's sake,
Lord God of Heaven and Earth, that I petition make,
But for Thy justice foiled. It irketh me to know
That I have tutored Man against Thee, to this woe,
And given him sure success. Yet is the World's self good,
And I would prove it Thee, lest Man's ingratitude
Should so affect all truth, all honour, all high faith,
That Thou Thyself, Lord God, shouldst fall a prey to death
And leave him in dominion. What to me were Heaven
With this thought unappeased—even thus absolved, for-
given,
Yet by myself condemned ?

The Lord God. Ah, Satan. Thy old pride
Still lingereth in the clefts. Yet art thou not denied
Since I have sworn thee faith. Go, thou good messenger,
And God's peace go with thee. Ho ! ye without ! Give
ear !

Bow down to the Lord Satan, Our anointed priest,
The new incarnate Word.

The Angels.

All hail !

Michael (aside).

The Anti-Christ !

CORONATION ODE

(1911)

O THOU enfolded in grief,
Man, with thy mantle of scorn !
Arise and warn !
Unloved prophet of ill
Who sittest clothed in thy grief,
In thy pride of unbelief,
In thy silence of love forsworn !
Speak thy word to the world ;
Let it be as a sword to thy will ;
Let it be as a spear that is hurled,
A banner of wrath unfurled,
A garment rent and torn.

Speak. They shall listen to thee,
A single voice at their feast.
To the last and least,
They shall hear what they loathe to hear.
In the day of their Jubilee,
Of their coronation feast,
With the wine at their insolent lips,
Though they lend no ear
And their shoutings ring
From the decks of a thousand ships
Acclaiming their new-crowned king
With a coronation cheer,
They shall hear.

Speak, in their jubilant hour,
In the midst of their might and mirth.
Be thy theme the Earth,
The ancient tale of the lands of fame,
Empires of earlier birth,
Which held the world in their lust of power
As their own for dower
And abused their trust.
Make thy theme of the wrath that came,
The smoke that rose, the devouring flame,
The day of glory, the night of shame
And the end of dust.

O thou enrobed in thy tears !
Thou hast heard the children sing,
The children that pass in the street,
The innocent ones with their chauntings proud,
The rhyme of their marching feet.
How their voices sting !
What is the word they say
In their play,
The hymn their young lips fashion ?
They have marched through the crowded ways
With flags and glory and shoutings loud
While the sun has looked down ablaze,
Amazed at their joyous passion.

Each one carries a sword,
A wooden sword in his hand,
With ribbon and belt and cord,
And a gun on his shoulder glorious,
Proud each one as a lord.
“ Soldiers,” they shout. “ We are soldiers come
From a battle-field. For, hark, the drum !
From a field of fight victorious.”

“Soldiers ! Soldiers ! Soldiers !” Weary am I
Of that word forlorn,
Of the king’s command,
Of the children’s insolent cry,
A nation’s cry whom the nations scorn
For its childish pride.
Better were these unborn !

England ! Where is she ? Where ?
Land of the fortunate free
Which hath ceased to be ?
What hath she done with her fame ?
The nations that envied her
Turned to her in their care,
Sought her light upon land and sea,
Called as once on her ancient name,
The name of her liberty.
But her ears were shut to their prayer ;
Her place was a sepulchre,
She had ceased in her strength to be,
She was no more free.

She fell as a star from its place,
As a bird from its path in the sky,
As a spring run dry,
A fruit in its rottenness,
As a drunken woman prone on her face
While the world went by,
And she knew not her own disgrace.
O thou, who hast seen her fall,
Who hast witnessed her agony,
Who hast looked on the face of the dead !
Lift up thy voice in the night and cry
“The harvest is harvested.
As these shall have made their bed,
So let them lie !”

THREE PLAYS IN RHYMED VERSE

FAND

THE BRIDE OF THE NILE

THE LITTLE LEFT HAND

FAND
A FÉERIE
IN THREE ACTS

(Written for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and performed there
in 1907.)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Cuchulain, son of Sualtim, champion of Ulster, otherwise called Settanta, or the Hound of Ulster.

Conhor, King of Ulster.

Laeg, Cuchulain's charioteer.

Laegaire } friends of Cuchulain.
Lugaid }

Labraid, of the Quick Sword, King of the Sidhe, in Magh Mell.

Manannan, a magician, King of the Sea.

Emer, Cuchulain's wife.

Fand, of the fair cheek, a fairy, wife to Manannan.

Liban, sister to Fand, and wife to Labraid.

Eithne, a poetess, beloved of Cuchulain.

Male and female attendants, chorus of fairies,
prisoners, etc.

FAND

ACT I

A room in the Speckled House at Emain. One portion of the stage is divided from the rest by a curtain. In it lies CUCHULAIN on a couch entranced, LAEG and EITHNE with him. Outside LUGAID, LAEGAIRE, and others, are playing noisily with dice, a flagon by them and horn cups. EITHNE singing. She has a distaff and spindle.

EITHNE'S SPINNING SONG

THINGS of the Earth and things of the Air,
Strengths that we feel though we cannot share,
Shapes that are round us and everywhere.

Things of the Sunlight and things of Sleep.
Into what grave doth the spirit creep
When limbs are loosened and life lies deep ?

Griefs that have blossomed, wounds that have bled.
How shall we meet on the day of dread,
When the dead are living, the living dead ?

Love is the master, and him we know,
Deals us our portion of weal and woe,
Leads us and leaves us to grieve and go.

Laegaire (rising). I have had enough of this. I need the air, Lugaid.

'Tis a fool's life we lead here by this sick man's bed.

Lugaid. Ay, a dog's life.

Laegaire. I've done. He neither lives nor dies. I want the sun, the wind, the blue face of the skies, The white mists on the mountains. We are useless here.

Lugaid. We will away to-morrow.

Laegaire. We will chase the deer In the free forest, run, shout. We have become diseased With his mad malady. 'Tis time we were released.

Lugaid. We have been a year here, watchers. What more can we do ?

We have done enough for him.

Laegaire. We will leave him with these two, Who will watch on.—And Emer, she will be here anon. I sent for her last night. When all is said and done His wife is his best guard, albeit he forbade. The day Laeg bore him in from Baile's strand he was mad, As thou well knowest, mad ; and we had promised him To carry out his bidding to the utmost whim ; He would not hear of Emer. Yet time solves all vows, And small has been his profit in this Speckled House With Eithne for consoler, and her songs and tears. She has lost her power to soothe. He needs more wit than hers,

However well she loves him. I have called Conhor too, His liege lord, whom he worships, his companion true. A wise man sure is Conhor. He will probe this thing And grant us our dismissal.

Lugaid. See, he comes. (*A voice.*) The King !

(*Enter CONHOR, who approaches slowly and withdraws the curtain. LAEG rises, but EITHNE sits weeping at CUCHULAIN'S feet.*)

Conhor. He sleeps on ?

Laeg. Ay ! he sleeps, and without change or sign
More than a tree in winter, his breath infantine,
His colour, as you see, a little paler grown
Through the long lying here. His cheeks have lost their
brown,
His brows their manliness, and all his frame is slack
As an uncoiled rope.

Conhor. Yet he is sound ?

Laeg. We find no lack
Of any bodily doing ; hand, and foot, and limb,
All seem compact, in order.

Conhor. Can none waken him ?

Laegaire. Conhor, not one of us. A year it is to-day
Since Laeg first laid him here. And still, do what we may,
He sleeps, and sleeps, and sleeps. He heeds us not at all.
The weakness came on him at the Spring Festival.
Some say it was the Sidhe, others a woman lewd
Who took him unawares, where he lay in a wood
Because the sun was hot, and scourged him at her will.
He spoke to Laeg of faces fair and terrible,
And not to be gainsaid, of a shape clothed in green,
Another in clear crimson, and of a third, a queen,
Who smote him with a rod, till he became a child
And yielded to her will ; and while she smote she smiled.
He told this and no more ; and the sun burned his head.
And so they bore him here, as one less live than dead,
To Eithne's Speckled House. He would not be brought
home,
Or hear of his wife Emer. He was mettlesome
On this one point. And since that day of evil we,
I, Laeg, and Lugaid, have watched him narrowly ;
And she, too, who weeps there. And we have hid him close,
For our oath's sake and her great love, here in her house
Unknown to all the world. And, Conhor, of a truth

We are weary of our lives, and grudge our days of youth
Spent idly in this room. We can no longer wait.

Conhor. And she, too, is she weary ?

Laeg.

Eithne ? Ay ! of late,

In spite of her long love. Awhile her voice to him
Served to bring understanding and a change of dream,
And he would turn and listen while she sang. But now
A month and more is past, and neither prayer, nor vow,
Nor chant is of avail. We are weary to our death
Of this unending watch. And we have lost our faith
In all things, even our love.

Laegaire.

Conhor, you are a king,

Speak to him as a master. Bid him leave this thing
And be himself once more.

Eithne (rising).

Ay ! Conhor. Use thy power,

Thou glorious King of Ulster. Even at this late hour
If thou shouldst speak to him in terms of thy high wrath
He could not choose but listen. Smite the fiend he hath
With thy authority. He shall not gainsay thee.

[*He bends over CUCHULAIN and takes him by the hand.*]

Conhor. Cuchulain, man, wake ! rouse thee !

Laegaire.

Nay, but lustily.

Conhor. Wake ! wake ! (*After a pause.*) My power
counts little. You who loved him know

He listened but to women, heeding nor friend nor foe
For all he was our champion. These possessed his ear ;
Never our man's persuasion. If she move him not,
Neither may I prevail to counterwork their plot.

(*After another pause.*)

O, pitiful Cuchulain ! What fool's fate is thine,
Thou mirror of our nation, our sun's self, which did shine
Like daylight on the world, and drawing all to thee !
How is thy pride departed ; the fair witchery
Of thy high hero's courage, and thy manly face,

Which was all Ireland's glory, Alban's sore disgrace,
 Beloving and beloved ! Hast thou forgot thy deeds,
 Thy battles, thy strong shoutings, thy delight in steeds,
 The clamouring of thy clansmen and the clash of spears ?
 Sualtim's son, bestir thee. Be as in past years.
 The day is gone for sleeping. Rise, man. To your arms.
 Your chariot waits. Laeg calls you. Hark to his alarms.
 The foe is at the ford !

[CÚCHULAIN moves restlessly, waving his arms.

Laegaire. He seems to wake, to hear.

He clutches for his sword. O, wise philosopher !
 Speak louder to him, Conhor.

Lugaid. By the powers of hell
 He shall not now escape us. Rouse him with a yell
 Such as he heard in Connaught.

[*They all shout.* CÚCHULAIN half rises, staring
 around him angrily. Then his eyes close
 and he falls back.

Eithne. He is beyond relief.
 He falls back to the darkness. O my grief ! my grief !
 [*She goes out weeping.*

Conhor. It is no use. He sleeps more soundly than
 before.

Lugaid. He mocks us, for he heard us.

Laegaire. Ay, he heard our roar
 As a wolf hears the hunters in his far-off den,
 And bares his teeth an instant, yawns, then sleeps again.
 He is beyond our rousing.

Conhor (drawing the curtain). Leave him to his sleep.
 Your noise shall not prevail, or haply make you weep
 If he should rise in anger. Where is his wife ?

Lugaid. Not here.
 At Dundéalgan is she. We sent a messenger,
 But she will hardly come. She is a woman proud,
 And will not face this other.

Conhor.

Eithne ?

Laegaire.

'Tis the cloud

In her high heaven. She sits and waits the end apart,
Not here at Emain Macha.

Conhor.

She has a mighty heart,
And has forgiven him much, and once he loved her well.
Love's memories lie close. Where they are housed they
dwell.

Laeg. Ay ! Emer is no babe. Her will for war or peace
Had ever a strong edge, and will not let her cease
Till she has gained her end—a woman passionate,
And fair, and masterful, either in love or hate.

Conhor. Ay ! a supreme, fair woman,—and his wife.
Time was

She clung to him, his shadow. Whereso'er he went
She followed unreprieved, beloved, obedient,
And yet commanding him. How often have I seen
The two in their first courting on the hurling green,
He godlike in his skill, she rapt and watching him,
Intent upon his triumphs, and with strained eyes dim
With the thrill of victory. The long day through she sat,
Made glorious by her love, his arbiter and fate,
To give him praise or counsel. I have seen her, too,
Handing him spears in battle while the javelins flew
Around them like a hail, both at death grips with men
Sublimely overnumbered, as of one to ten,
Yet victors in the fight, where each took glorious toll.
He feared her while he loved, and both were as one soul,
A noble apparition. Later a change came.
He was a man, inconstant. Spite of his great name,
He stooped to things inglorious. Foolish loves he had
With foolish, pretty women, whom his fame drove mad,
And who must tempt him from her. She was high-born,
proud.
She scorned to be their rival. Silently, calm-browed,

She stepped back from his life. He went alone to war.
 Yet she subdued him still, and brought him back to her,
 Twice, thrice. There was a savage tincture in her blood,
 Which always overcame. He fears her in this mood,
 And fear is kin to love, and both work miracles ;
 For this 'twere well she came.

Laeg. I hear her chariot wheels
 Already in the court. For certain she is there.

(Enter EMER, who approaches them doubtfully.)

Emer. Laegaire ! Lugaid ! The King ! You sent for
 me, Laegaire ?

Laegaire. Ay, for we needed thee. Thy husband lies
 within,

As thou well knowest, asleep ; such sleep as is akin
 To sickness, on our hands. We are beyond our wit
 To cure him or to wait. See, lady, you to it,
 We yield him to your care.

Emer. Who brought him to this house ?
 Was it thy order, Conhor, he lies far from us,
 Thy order,—or what woman's ?

Conhor. Emer, none of ours.
 Thou knowest his mastering will, the strength which over-
 powers

All impulse but his own. 'Twas his own headstrong choice,
 These dared not disobey nor raise a counter voice.
 They hid it from thee long.

Emer. Too long. And where is she ?

Conhor. Eithne ? She might not stand betwixt the
 sun and thee.

She fled before thy coming as the wild dove flies
 Before the falcon's wing, nor thinks which way be wise
 So it escape her rage. There lies the man you love.
 She shall not vex him more, nor thee.

Emer. Enough, enough.

What is your Eithne to me, or all womankind,
That she should fear to see me ? Think you my peace of
mind

Is of such unstable stuff it should be over-set
By a girl's folly, a man's fanciful regret
For youthful joys remembered, and the sickly need
Of a new maiden bosom for his aching head ?
Conhor, no more of this ; pass on to larger themes.
The man, your friend, lies here, by what foul stratagems
Stricken I may but guess ; the man, your champion,
The bulwark of your State, Sualtim's glorious son,
Foe of your foes, Cuchulain. What have you dared for him
Who dared all for your help, who risked life, fortune, limb
Each prodigal day for you ? You hid him from me close,
You grudged him to my care, in this unhallowed house.
How have you proved your wisdom ? You are a king of
men :

Did you command a cure ? Are there no Druids, then,
In all the land to serve you ? Have the woods no charms,
No herbs, no poison flowers, since harms are met with harms
And poisons with more poison ? Have you probed the
hills

For a wise omen, searched the seas to cure his ills ?
The Gods have many omens. Have you asked of them
A single sign in prayer or clung to Nature's hem
For a least alms of pity ? Speak ! Would you let him die ?
Away with you for cowards !

Conhor.

Emer, verily

These waited while he slept. They deemed he would
awake

With the new dawn of summer, and arise and break
His bonds as a bear roused.

Laegaire.

We watched and waited here

Until our hearts were sick.

Emer.

Like crows a wounded deer !

Nay, as brute sheep are you which on the hillside graze,
 Nor see more than the herbage on the mountain ways.
 His spear alone to you was worth a thousand spears,
 His shout all Ulster's shouting, his rage all its tears.
 And you sit on and watch. You, Conhor, are his lord :
 You stand and look at him and speak your royal word
 Of your high royal bounty—and go forth ? Laegaire,
 You come here for your chess play. You, his charioteer,
 Laeg, drowse at his bed-head. You weep for him, Lugaid,
 As a man weeps with wine, and drink as to one dead.
 Are these the ways of men ? Had it Cuchulain been,
 And you the slumberers, what wonders had been seen
 In every realm of Ireland ! Not a Druid's skill
 But had been impressed to service—ay, against his will.
 If Fergus had been sick, think you the Hound's swift brain
 Had caught no remedy ? If Connall had thus lain
 All Albion had been ransacked by Sualtim's son.
 Rise, Laeg, put wings upon thy feet, thou sluggard ! Run
 Through hill and dale for help ; press all men to his need.
 You shall not let him die.

Laeg. Ay ! Emer, we take heed ;
 Yet art thou less than just.

Emer. Justice is powerless here.
 'Tis tyranny should rule. (*To CONHOR.*) Be thou strength's
 messenger,
 And bring peace with the sword.

Laegaire. Ay ! Emer, with the sword.
 The thought is a man's thought. Thou hast thy woman's
 word

More potent than our own. We go forth all for thee.
 Command us as thou wilt.

Lugaid. Ay ! go we joyfully.
 We leave him in thy hands.

Conhor. Thou shalt keep watch and ward
 While we are in the mountains. If our quest be hard,

Our zeal shall make it light. Only, do thou take heed.
 The man thou lovest is sick. He standeth in sore need,
 Beset by ills not human. There are shapes and shades
 We know of, yet see never, in the forest glades,
 And on the heaths and rivers deadly to us men.
 It needs a mightier power to drive them to their den
 Than only arms and courage—nay, than only love—
 Else had he long been rescued. Guard him close, and prove
 All comers with thy questions. Be advised. Who knows
 What spirits may appear, in what enchantments gross,
 To work his full undoing.

Emer,

Or to work him weal.

The powers have sometimes pity. They have a hand to
 heal

Where they have wounded ; bring back strength, restore,
 make good

Losses sustained through pain ; earn human gratitude
 By more than human help.

Conhor.

Be politic with these,

And know the good and evil of all fantasies.

Lady, I kiss your hand.

[*Exit CONHOR.*

Emer.

I do not fear the spirits,

Who lead a wiser life than our sad world inherits.

Rather man's foolishness.

Laegaire.

We bid you our farewell.

We will bring you back his cure, were it a herb from hell.

I go with a light heart.

Lugaid.

And I. To the hills ! Lugaid !

Shout, brother, we are released, a shout to wake the dead !

[*LAEGAIRE and LUGAID go out shouting.*

Laeg. Lady, I do thy bidding. Be thou circumspect.
 See where he lies within (*half drawing the curtain*).

[*Exit LAEG.*

Emer (listening to the shouts outside). There go they, the
 elect,

The warrior lords of Ulster. Peace be with their ways.
 Yet why should I say "peace," since peace is a dispraise,
 And war their only pastime? They have watched too long,
 And are like boys let loose. They shout their battle-song
 Already in the street. I had need to wish them war;
 Fight to their hearts' content. And what a race men are!
 How small their practical worth! They have the thing
 we lack,

The doggedness of will, to stand with a stiff back
 Against all odds of fear in a death-stricken field,
 And win the day or lose it—at least, not to yield—
 The rage themselves call courage. But beyond it, what?
 Nothing of any count. We weave the nobler plot
 Who are the strengthless women. What they spend we
 keep

And build up in our souls, and half forget to weep.
 Only, our hearts betray us—always, utterly.

*[She goes to CUCHULAIN'S couch, draws back the
 curtain and kneels by him.]*

Settanta! My beloved. Dost thou hear me? See,
 I have come to thee at last, although thou wouldst not come.
 Hast thou forgot them, then, the pleasures of thy home,
 The faces of thy children, thy delight in all
 The fair things which were thine, which were a festival
 Each day to thee renewed? I am Emer, thy true wife,
 Who asks but to forgive thee. *(After a pause.)* O, my
 grief! my grief!

He hears me not, nor knows. *(After another pause.)* Who
 brought thee to this pass,

Man, that thou liest here, with thy sad, witless face
 All the sweet summer through? What women evil-eyed
 Have set their blight on thee? I do not blame their pride,
 Beloved, that they loved thee. But 'twas a foolish whim
 That thou shouldst love them back, be pitiful to them.
 Enough of this dissembling. Rise, Settanta, wake!

It is summer in the hills. The wild swans on the lake
Have every pair their brood. The does from lawn to lawn
Crop the sweet grass in joy, and each one with her fawn.
All are awake but thou, Settanta. (*After a pause.*) His
eyes close.

He is beyond my skill. He neither hears nor knows.

[*She buries her face in her hands.*]

(*Enter FAND, closely veiled, with doubting steps, as of
an old woman.*)

Fand. Lady !

Emer. What voice is thine that questions of my grief ?

Fand. One's who would bring thee counsel.

Emer. Canst thou bring relief

For a long, causeless ache, rekindle fires grown cold,
Awake hearts worse than dead, and loves that have waxed
old ?

Hast thou a remedy for ills that have no cure ?

Fand. I come from one that knows, and from a far-off
shore,

A friend to thee and thine.

Emer. Nay, woman. Get thee hence !

Begone ! These have no need of thee, nor I of friends.

Fand. Yet were it well thou listened. Lady, this
disease

Is not a common ill, but of those maladies

Which are the gods' to send, the gods' to take away.

I would share counsels with thee for his cure.

Emer.

Nay, nay.

What know you of the gods ?

Fand. What those know who have seen.

Emer. The gods have little pity on the sons of men.

They live in their own world apart, their mountain tops,

Their inaccessible mists, aloof from human hopes.

They know not of our doings, and we know them not.

Woman, hast thou their ear? Canst thou, too, haply float
 Upon the rain, and hear their voices in the wind?
 Hast thou held converse with them, thou of human kind?
 Thy words are idle phrases, and the gods are far.

Fand. Yet are there others, lady, who more congruous
 are,

And serve us to interpret. Mortal shapes have they,
 With men's own loves and passions, and less far away.
 They live with them unseen in every lake and rill—
 Ay, too, and in their homes as the invisible
 Co-partners of their lives. The great gods delegate
 Their sovereign power to these, and these control men's fate
 On sundry strange occasions. Wouldst thou not hear of
 them?

Wouldst thou refuse their message? Listen, noble dame.
 The Sidhe-folk are his friends, and, as thou lovest, they love.
 They would not he should die.

Emer. And their help's price? They prove
 Their pleasure to what profit? They will hardly give
 Their succour without payment.

Fand. All the world must live.
 But these are generous givers, and their price is small.

Emer. I dare not trust them. Nay, a blight is on them
 all:

They are not of human blood.

Fand. They are of human passion.
 They love and would be loved, but in less selfish fashion
 Than you with your mad lives. Yet are they ill to cross,
 And whoso mocks at them 'tis to his pain and loss.
 Lady, forbear your railing.

Emer. And you? Who are you,
 Woman? Are you one of them that you hold the clue
 Of their designs?

Fand. Grant me full audience. Let me speak.
 O gracious lady, listen. Fand with the fair cheek

Is she that sent me hither. Fand, Manannan's Queen,
Of the shores of Eoghan lord, and of the islands green
Twixt Inbhir and the sea.

Emer. Fand, daughter of Abrat ?

Fand. Ay, she of the pure eyes, the face which some
relate

Is as an unshed tear for its wise chastity.

Ah ! she is pure. How pure ! All men she doth deny
Who come to crave her grace. She looketh upon none,
Though now for a year past Manannan, the sea's son,
Hath gone forth in his ships and left her without guard.
Yet pitiful is she. There is no wandering Bard,
No Druid in the land, but asketh alms of her.

She taketh delight in heroes. All things great and fair
Move her to joy and pity—battle, glory, fame,
Heroic feats of arms, the deeds that earn a name,
The songs that win men's tears. Thou knowest, who art
generous,

The largeness of great bounty in an ungrudging house,
The largeness of compassion. Long hath she known of
thee

And him who lieth here, and of his malady,
Since she knows all ; and lately she was touched with pity
And sent me here, her angel, to this alien city,
To help thee and to heal. And, lady, if thou please,
I will put forth my power—as thus—on his disease,
And cure him of his ill—as thus—and thus—and thus—

[She makes magic passes with her hands which

CUCHULAIN responds to in his sleep.

And bring him to remembrance of days glorious,
And of his noble deeds and his great fame with men.
And he shall be more a man twice told than he was then,
For thee and for thy love. Yet only if thou will.
See how my hands can move him.

Emer.

I mistrust thy skill.

What is the price ? The price ? Thou art a woman old.
How were it wert thou young ? Shall I pour out my gold,
My jewels, in thy lap ? Fand hath her price ?

Fand.

She hath.

Only do thou, fair lady, keep an equal faith,
Nor challenge us too strictly of our means and ways.
We borrow him of thee.

Emer.

How so ?

Fand.

For forty days.

This is Fand's message to thee : In return for good,
Thy hero being restored, with health and strength renewed,
Grant him to fight with us against our enemies,
Eochaid and Siabatha, who are Manannan's spies
And leagued against her peace. But with Cuchulain's aid
She shall be free from fear ; and they too, and Labraid,
Shall meet their men in battle and make discord cease.
And so for forty days. Then shall he turn in peace,
Fair lady, to your pleasure.

Emer.

Thou dost tempt me. Yet——

Fand. Thou doubttest of my skill. Behold him in my
net,

A bird held by the fowler.

[CUCHULAIN *struggles on the couch.*

Emer.

Stop ! Do naught to him.

You are not of our blood. Your purpose is too dim,
Your face too full of meaning. You are a woman old.
How were it were you young ? My fears are manifold,
My faith in thee a shred.

Fand.

Must he then find his death,
Your hero ? Nay, behold him ; note his labouring breath,
The darkness of his cheeks, his hands that clutch and strive.
Have you no pity on him ? Must he, then, not live ?

Emer. Yours is an evil presence.

Fand.

He has felt my power ;
He struggles with his sickness. It is the fateful hour !

His life hangs on a thread, the word of our debate.
Say, shall he live or die ?

Emer (aside). She is importunate,

I know not what to think. It may be she is true.

Fand. Speak, quick. His hour approaches.

Emer. What, then, would you do ?

Fand. He shall be safe with me. His life as my own life,
Ay, as the life of Fand. He shall not need his wife

In one short glorious war which shall restore his fame

And bring him back to you recaptured from all blame,

A hero to your arms. Behold the dolorous man

Laid on his couch of death ; how pitifully wan,

How frail a thing for you. We take him upon lease,

Lady, to cure and save and yield him to your grace

Ere forty days are done, a new man, sound and whole

And worthy of your worship,—once more soul to soul,

Body to body yours,—a man !

Emer. She tempts me sore.

The occasion is too great.

Fand. Thou sayest ?

Emer. I give o'er.

I leave him to thy skill. Deal with him as thou wilt.

Only beware of failure. Yours shall be the guilt

And yours the punishment if treachery there be,

And a long arm of vengeance stretched remorselessly.

Fand. I undertake the charge. At Baile's strand we
will meet,

And on the fortieth day. In glory or defeat

Fand shall be there with him to win her thanks of you.

Emer. I go back to Dundevalgan in all faith.

Fand. Adieu.

[*Exit EMER.* FAND, alone, unveils herself.

Forgive me, heaven, my guile ! She is a noble woman.

And I did not promise all ; and promises are human,

And die as mortals die. Ay, a most noble queen,—

And yet a woman only. We who wear the green
Have subtler hearts than theirs. They beat against the
strings,

These poor souls that must die, and strive and bruise their
wings

Like wild birds in a cage, and end by losing all.

We are more wise who take life as a festival,

And sing without a tear. A little tenderness

Is all men want ; not tears, not complaints, not ecstasies,

Not anything discordant with their cup of pleasure.

They had rather hear us laugh, however false the measure,

Than listen to our griefs. For this men love us more

And do our bidding better. She has lost her power

Through over-wifely ways ; and his too violent heart

Rebels against her virtues. 'Tis the counterpart

Of virtue that men prize,—not virtue's self,—the mock

Of things divine and wise that gives the sentient shock

These value in their passions. Yet there are times and
moods

When even we feel human, dire solitudes,

Resentments, angers, fears. Manannan angers me

Beyond my natural heat. He has gone back to the sea

And left me to my wrath, and now is leagued with those

Who are my enemies, the Sidhe's ancestral foes.

How sweet it were a vengeance !—and to love again !

[She bends over CUCHULAIN, soothing him.]

Behold a man worth holding, a true king of men,

Settanta, the beloved ! How many hearts have beat

To see him riding by with flower crowns through the street

In triumph from the battle,—no man's face, but a god's,—

Fighter and victor ever, and against all odds !

What woman might withstand him ? He lies here to-day

A lion in my toils, my captive. I could slay

Cuchulain with a word who slew the Connaught Kings.

He trembles at my presence. To my eyes he clings

As a child to its mother's skirt. His lips part with a cry.
 I could wake him with a touch ; or I could let him die
 For lacking of a touch. This hour he is my own.
 Will he love me when he wakes ? Who knows ? Some
 hearts are stone ;

But not Settanta's. No. He loves a woman's face.
 Fand's he will not despise, nor rise up passionless.

*[She sings to him, waving her arms the while.
 He wakens and sits up and stares round
 him.]*

Song—"BEAUTIFUL EYES AWAKE"

Beautiful eyes awake !

Undo the latchets of sleep.

Be your lids unloosed,

As winter is loosed from the hills

When the forests tremble and quake,

And the snow is poured from the rills,

And the waters gather and grow,

And the fountains and streams run free,

And the lake's face brims in the sun,

And the skies' unshepherded sheep

Are noosed in the light of the noon—

 In the light of its life—ah, me !

Awake ! Be wise, and rejoice.

There are things more worthy than sleep,

Than the golden dream of thy soul,

Than the words of thy lips in tune.

There are things that shall leap and run,

At the sound of thy conquering voice,

On the day thou shalt wake from thy swoon

And gather thy strength and arise.

There are hearts that shall tremble and weep

At the rush of thy conquering voice,

At the sight of thy lips, thine eyes,
At the tale of thy deeds to be,
At the thought of thy strength—ah, me !

Awake ! Arise, and behold.
The glory of earth and air
Is a fair new kingdom won ;
The glory of lake and sea.
By these shall thy deeds be told,
By the maidens that braid their hair,
With the locks and the crowns of gold ;
By the women that proudest are.
They shall bow to thy conquering voice,
They bow to their king to be ;
They shall kneel at thy feet—ah, me !
For all women love thee—ah, me !
A woman loves thee—ah me !

Cuchulain. Where am I ? Was it Eithne ? Is it her
house ? Emain ?

Yet it was not Eithne's voice. It was like a sound of rain
On the tree tops heard at noon. I have slept long in the
heat.

I need to be aroused, to rise and feel my feet,
To stamp, to do some powerful thing with my hands, to
shout.

Yet I am weak ; my voice is thin ; I feel afraid, in doubt.
I have been long sick here. I remember how it was ;
The sun's strength on my head where I lay in the grass
By the yew tree at Baile's Strand ; the women that were
there,

Beautiful, wonderful eyes, and a mad mass of hair,
Like Dana the Earth Spirit. They struck me first in play,
Then with a heavy hand, and then I swooned away
In pleasure half and pain. (*He calls.*) Eithne !

Fand (showing herself). She is not here.
 'I wait upon your pleasure, fair son of Dechtire,
 To serve you and to honour. Shall I bring you aught ?
 Milk, honey, lentils, mead ? You have been long dis-
 traught.

A draught to give you courage ?

Cuchulain. Ay, I will have mead.
 'Tis always the best cure. A curse upon my head (*trying
 to rise*).

It swims when I would stand.

Fand. Let me support you. So.
 Lean on me—your full weight. 'Tis a mere nothing.

Cuchulain. No.
 I cannot stand alone. My knees beneath me flinch
 Like a man's struck in the battle when the spear shafts
 pinch.

Give me the mead, good soul.

Fand. Come, one step forward. There !
 You are at your travel's end. Sit bravely in this chair
 While I pour out the tankard. Here is a flagon left
 By the roysterers that watched him—all thanks for the gift.
[She pours out to him.]

Drink, noble Hound of Ulster—God confound your foes !
*[CUCHULAIN drinks, and she sits at his feet
 caressing him.]*

Cuchulain. You are a kind sweet woman, fair as a wild
 rose
 With the dew of morning on it. (*Playing with her hair.*)

Fand. The mead has done you good.
 You are feeling like a man. (*She kisses his hand.*)

Cuchulain. This is beatitude.
 I feel my courage rising. Soul of my life ! I swear
 Your lips have given me strength. You are most sweetly
 fair,
 A woman of a thousand.

Fand. Only one who is
Your servant among women, in all kindnesses,
Your servant, suppliant.

Cuchulain. What, pretty, is your name ?

Fand. Men call me Fand.

Cuchulain. How ? Fand of the fair cheek ?

Fand. The same.

Cuchulain. I have heard men speak of her. They say—
what is it they said ?

They called you like a tear, a passionate tear, unshed,
A single passionate tear—and they spoke truth.

Fand. Alas !

I would be a smile to please you, not a tearful face.

Cuchulain. How came you to me here, sweet face ?

Fand. I came from far,

And with a wish, a hope—half peace, and half of war.

Of peace to heal Cuchulain.

Cuchulain. The poor Hound. What more ?

Fand. Of war to ask his succour ; since my need was sore,
To win him to my side.

Cuchulain. As what ?

Fand. A Champion

To fight for me --and love me. And there was but one,
Worthy of that—and this, in the whole land of Eire.

Cuchulain. You speak, sweet, in no riddles.

Fand. Truth is best. A fire
Set on a hill brings help. And thou wilt help me. See

I speak as to a god whom no hypocrisy

Can argue into favour, truly as a god

Who needs not our dissembling when we seek his nod,

Nor any form of prayer save only " Grant thy grace,

Do with me as thou wilt. But let me see thy face."

And I have seen Settanta's !

Cuchulain. Thy god answers thee.
And thou shalt be his goddess and thy champion he.

How shall I help thee, Queen ? On what far angry shore
Shall I descend in wrath and drive thy foes before,
Like wolves from their strong places ? Shall I scourge the
seas

With my arm's flail, and pour my vials on the breeze
Which circles Albion's shore. Shall I fire the eastern main ?
What new lands shall I conquer for thy sweet disdain ?
Fand with the passionate eyes ; Fand with the fair rose
cheek.

Pour all thy soul in words ! Nay, I conjure thee, speak !
Whom shall I slay for thee ?

Fand. Settanta, none to-day ;
Let all the wicked live. They are not worth thy say ;
They are not worth thy rage. To-morrow thou shalt kill
Men to thy heart's desire, and go forth terrible
To all my foes and me. To-day I ask thee less ;
I am Fand, and at thy feet. Wilt thou love her ?

Cuchulain. Sweet one, yes.

ACT II

SCENE.—*The Garden of Abrat in Magh Mell. There are fairy trees and fairy flowers. A banquet is spread on one side of the stage.*

(*A Chorus of the Sidhe. LIBAN and FAND conversing.*)

Song—"IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING."

Chorus. In the land of the living are kingdoms twain,
Kingdoms twain,—nay, kingdoms three;
One of the gods and one of men,
And one of the people who hold the glen.
The happy people, of these are we,
The ever-living, the Sidhe, the Sidhe.

In the land of the living are kingdoms twain,
Kingdoms twain,—nay, kingdoms three;
One is of sunshine and one of rain,
And one of the moonlight without a stain.
The moonlight people, of these are we,
The ever-happy, the Sidhe, the Sidhe.

In the land of the living are kingdoms twain,
Kingdoms twain,—nay, kingdoms three;
One is of pleasure and one of pain,
And one of the love which is loved in vain.
The ever-lovers, of these are we,
The happy people, the Sidhe, the Sidhe.

Liban. And are *you* a happy lover ? Are *you* happy Fand ?

Fand. The happiest woman, sister, of all fairyland.
How were it otherwise ? You see him what he is,
A very prince of love and lord of happiness.
A *man* is a better lover than our Sidhe-folk are,
Because his heart beats faster. Whether in love or war,
Cuchulain has the rage which is the life of things.

Liban. He is less subtle, surely.

Fand. He has imaginings
Begot of human sorrow, which are beyond our wit,
Beyond our subtlety. Men's joys are infinite
Because their time is short. Joy has its root in tears.

Liban. And does Cuchulain weep ?

Fand. He grieves for his lost years
And for the years to come. Though he has loved so much
He thinks he has never loved. He would have such and such
A joy, lest time should rob him. He is in haste to reap
The whole of his life's crop, and lay it in a heap
As it were here at my feet, to-day and not to-morrow.
This is his cause of grief.

Liban. Heaven grant us all such sorrow.
You are well venged of Manannan.

Fand. Manannan ? Where is he
In all these happy ventures ? I am released and free.

Liban. Manannan was a fool, sister, to leave you thus.
You are transformed, transfigured.

Fand. O, I am glorious
As a crane in her spring plumage. Who was it that said
A woman should love once, and only once ?

Liban. Your head
Has reason to be turned. It will be sad for you
The hour when this shall end.

Fand. Liban, what shall I do ?
The fortieth day is near. He has won his victory.

His hero work is finished, fought out gloriously,
And all my foes are captive, put to flight, or slain.
I cannot keep him chained although he loves his chain.
How shall I hold my word? I have promised, place and
time.

To yield him to his wife. Would failure be a crime
Where time means happiness, for him no less than me ?
What is our rule of honour ? May we not faithless be
A little for love's sake ?

Liban. It is a doctrine hard

That love should yield to aught. Yet must we keep our
word.

The Sidhe-folk do not lie.

Fand. I will not grieve to-day,
I am too light-hearted. No. Let grief come when it may,
To-day I will laugh and sing.

Liban. Sister, to laugh is best.
We cannot know the future. Love should make its nest
Only for one short spring, as the birds do who give
Their whole souls to a moment.

Fand. I will live and live
As never woman yet, and when the time comes—then
It will be time enough for tears.

(Enter LAEG in haste.)

Liban. Here comes our prince of men,
Laeg, his good messenger. What news?

Laeg. All well, all well.

Liban. Labraid ?

Fand. Cuchulain ?

Laeg. All. I ran in front to tell
The news of their safe coming, and they follow close.

Fand. Laeg, tell us of the battle? Did he press his foes
As fiercely as of old. Did his strength come to him?

Laeg. O he was terrible. He stood there limb to limb

With Siabarcha wrestling, each a granite wall
 Leaning upon the other, grappling for a fall,
 Rigid as stone together till the last crash came.

Liban. How came the fight about ?

Laeg. It was Eochaid's sole blame
 That brought the battle on and roused his bitterness.
 We had met Eochaid at the spring, who had stooped to wash
 his face,

In jest at my lord's weakness, leaving one shoulder bare,
 While his fellows stood around him with a heedless air,
 Their heads thus on their hands (*with a gesture of sleeping*),
 as if to mimic sleep.

They had heard of my lord's sickness, and they held him cheap,
 And laughed out in derision. But Cuchulain took
 Gay Bolg, his spear, from me and poised it till it shook
 Like a reed in the north wind, and with a sudden throw,
 Swift as a snake that strikes, ere she is seen, her foe,
 Sent it among them singing. Thus it was. The shaft
 Pierced Eochaid's shoulder through—ay, even as the hero
 laughed.

Then on Cuchulain came an unappeasable wrath,
 Seeing we two were alone, with all these on the path,
 His and thy enemies ; and round his head there shone
 The hero light of battle ; and to each mother's son
 He shouted his defiance, words that were not words
 But biting points of steel. And all they drew their swords
 Who heard him, yet stayed not, and fled before his rage,
 While he pursued and slew. And no man dared assuage
 The fury of his anger till thy kinsmen came.
 And now they turn in triumph, each lord to his dame,
 And with them captive kings. But Senach stricken sore
 Fled down the road to death. He shall thee vex no more,
 He nor Eochaid nor Eoghan.

Fand.

O, sweet victory,

O, day of all the days ! There is none, Laeg, but he

A hero in the world, since the great gods withdrew
Apart to their lone mountains, angered at things new,
And left men to their ways. Liban, they come, they come.
Call all the women in. Bring garlands. Deck the room.
Bid every minstrel play. To-day we triumph all,
And celebrate their praise in one brave festival.
Laeg, here is this for thee.

[She gives him a gold chain from her neck.]

Liban. And are none hurt? Labraid?
Has he come back unharmed?

Laeg. Ay, even as I said,
They are all here untouched, scathless of grief or ill.
The foe before them fled as 'twere a miracle,
All. Only Siabbartha, whom Cuchulain broke
Asunder in his arms as the storm rends an oak.

Fand. And he, my lord Manannan?

Laeg. Lady, Manannan waits
The issue in his ships, guarding the eastern gates.
The slain men were his spies. He will outlive their death,
Being more wise than they.

Liban. His sword clings to its sheath,
Yet will he come in war. He has a heavy hand,
Stronger than all the storms that are by sea or land.

Laeg. Is he stronger than Cuchulain?

Liban. He has the magic cloak,
Stronger than love or death. Love yet shall be a smoke
Before Manannan's ire. Fand has good cause for fear.

Fand. I fear him not to-day, Liban. He is powerless here,
In this fair mountain place, far from his fastnesses,
Which all are of the ocean. Here his magic is
Unskilled for mortal hurt, nor dares he face the green
Of gardens watered thus, save as a shape unseen,
And impotent to wound. The anger in his blood
Would be but a faint tremor in our multitude.
The sea is his dominion, and to-day, sweetheart,

We will forget, forgive him.

Liban. A sweet fool thou art,
Deserving to be happy, and no martyrdom.
Thou knowest not how to hate.

Fand. Sister, they come ! they come !

(*Enter a procession, CUCHULAIN, LABRAID, and the army of the Sidhe, crowned with flowers. Prisoners in chains are with them. FAND and LIBAN advance and sing alternate verses.*)

Song—"WHO IS THE MAN ?"

Fand (singing).

Who is the man I see,
Set on his chariot of war,
Beautiful, dark-faced, proud ?
His eyes as the eagle's are,
His brow is a summer cloud,
His smile is of victory.
He hath looked on the lands afar,
He hath scorn both of fool and wise.
The man with the eagle's eyes
Is the man I see.

Liban (singing).

Tell me, thou glorious one,
Son of Sualtim, say,
What are the deeds thou hast done ?
Where are the men thy foes,
Thy foes who were foes to me ?
Thou art here in thy pride. And they ?
Not thou but the raven knows.
When the battle was lost and won
They were cast to the wolves a prey ;
There was left of them all not three,
Not two, not a mother's son.
Not one was there left to flee.

Fand (singing).

Hero ! What women's eyes
 Rise in their tears for thee ?
 The men they loved thou hast slain.
 Thy face is fairer than theirs,
 They shall weep till thou come again,
 The sun in their summer skies.
 They shall smile and forget their cares.
 Thou shalt kiss the tears from their eyes,
 Thy love shall have made them wise,
 They shall laugh, ay, loud in their glee,
 They shall laugh with me.

[FAND makes show of kneeling at CUCHULAIN'S feet, LIBAN at LABRAID'S, but CUCHULAIN kisses FAND'S hand, while LABRAID raises up LIBAN.]

Labraid. We greet you, ladies, well. The hour of home coming

Is always war's best part, and the sweet smiles you bring
 That make our joy the keener. Liban ! (*He embraces her.*)

Cuchulain (to FAND). I kneel to you.

Lady of my soul (*kissing her hands*).

Fand. Nay, nay. The hand-kissing is due
 To you alone, Settanta. Let me pay my debt (*she kisses his hand*)

Thus here before them all, lest later I forget
 In my great joy to thank you. How should Fand not give
 Her worship to her champion, who first made her live,
 Alas, and made her love !

[*They all walk towards the banquet.*]

Cuchulain (to FAND). In love there are no thanks,
 Whoever gives or takes ; and the least generous ranks
 With the most glorious god in all he can bestow.
 Let us be happy, sweet, whatever debt we owe

On this side or on that of unpaid gratuities.
 To-day we will walk together in these scented woods,
 Holding each other's hands. Now to the feast.

*[They take their places at the table near the
 front of the stage.]*

Labraid (seating himself with LIBAN under a canopy). My
 queen,

You give a gay returning here for hungry men.
 Let us fall to.

[Music plays, and there is a dance of Fairies.]

Chorus. In the land of the living are kingdoms twain,
 Kingdoms twain,—nay, kingdoms three ;
 One of the slayer and one of the slain,
 And one of the kings that come back again.
 Of these are we, the victorious Sidhe,
 The ever-happy, the Sidhe, the Sidhe.

Labraid (to LIBAN). Enough. Now send the flagons
 round

For better entertainment. What mirth have you found
 To celebrate the day ?

Liban. There are two bards from Meath,
 But neither of much count. They wear the poet's wreath,
 But lack the poet's fire. A blind harper there is
 Better worth hearing from beyond the Eastern seas,
 And with him a fair youth, it is said, a messenger
 From Cathbad, the Arch Druid, one with wit severe
 And finer flights of fancy than beseem his age,
 Master of recitation and high verbiage.

Labraid. Let them be called. To-day we need a master's
 tongue

To give praise to our guest. What matter he be young
 So the gods speak through him. Let him be called.

[They seat themselves at the feast.]

(*Drinking to CUCHULAIN.*) To you,
 Cuchulain, valiant friend and war-companion true,

Champion of Ulster, King, and of all Ireland first
And noblest fighting man, we consecrate this thirst,
The fruit of glorious toil.

Fand. Settanta, to your praise.

Liban. We drink to you, Cuchulain. Peace and length
of days.

Others. To you, to you, Cuchulain.

(*Enter EITHNE disguised as a poet, followed by MANANNAN
disguised as a harper. Neither of them is recognised by
the guests.*)

Fand. What are these two, the boy,
The old man?—a strange union. This one blushing, coy;
The other a veiled spectre. Do you know them?

Cuchulain. Nay.
I seem to have seen the youth, but vaguely, far away—
I have forgotten where.

Fand. And the harper? Watch him close.
To me he is familiar.

Cuchulain. He is from Meath.

Fand. Who knows?
They came both strangers here. His eye is like a snake's,
Which watches with lids closed and seems asleep, but wakes.
Keep close to me Settanta.

Labraid. Whence and what are you,
Bards, who thus honour us where welcome is most due
To sing at our high feast? Your name? Your lineage?
(*To Eithne.*) You are young to be a poet.

Eithne. Poets have no age.
They are born of their own thoughts.

Labraid. It is well said. And he?

Eithne. His hand shall touch the strings. He shall strike
gloriously,
And you shall listen all.

Labraid. What, poet, wilt thou sing?

Eithne. That which the gods shall breathe into my ear.

I bring

No thought which is my own. Yet thou shalt listen.

Labraid.

Chaunt

Thy praise of our high hero. We will reward thy vaunt.

Eithne. Thou shalt have little pleasure.

Labraid.

Yet sing on.

Eithne.

Of thee ?

Labraid is monarch here.

Labraid.

As thou wilt, let it be.

Cuchulain. His voice disturbs me strangely. To my ear
it clings

Like an enchantment, echoing remembered things,

Ulster, Emain, my glory—dreams I had forgot.

Fand. Do they still grieve thee then ?

Cuchulain.

Nay, love, it matters not.

It was an echo only.

[*Manannan strikes chords on the harp.*

Fand.

Didst thou hear that ?

Cuchulain.

The sound

Of the harper's prelude searching till the words be found ?

Fand. It was the sea's voice calling. It was the sea that
spoke,

The black-surge of the shingle and the waves that broke
In thunder on the beach.

Cuchulain.

I heard it not. It was

To me like land winds wandering through the meadow grass.

Fand. Listen.

Eithne (sings, addressing LABRAID).

Song—"HOW SHALL I SING ?"

How shall I sing to thee, Labraid,

Thou Lord

Of the quick sword,

Thou hero born ?

Upon this day of days
My lays shall comfort bring,
Even as the snows in Spring,
The wind of ill, that blights the corn.

They ask a song of thee, O soul of mine,
A song of wine
And joyous mirth,
Thou raven in their path.
The cup he hath
That shall the poet fill.
Nay, hide thy wrath,
Thou seer of things divine.
Bind thou thy locks unshorn,
Fill high thy horn.

They ask thy praise,
With peace and length of days.
Let loose thy tongue
To a new stream of fire.
Pay them their hire,
Or leave thy songs in impotence unsung.
Why spare them their amaze ?
Scourge thou their lips with scorn,
With thorn on thorn.

Peace ! Who shall speak of peace ?
Who in the silences
Shall cry with eyes outworn ?
Who calm their ire ?
Since man is the thing he is,
Slave of a day's desire,
Thrall of a woman's kiss,
Breath of a serpent's hiss.
Man, of a woman born.

[They show signs of disapproval.]

Labraid. What meanest thou, young poet? This is a festal day.

We asked thee for thy blessing, and thy verses play
Like lightning on the rocks, a too discordant tune.
This warrior is our guest. If thou wouldst ask a boon,
We give thee all thy wish, so thou sing joyously.
Who sent thee with this word?

Eithne. From the high gods am I,
And Cathbad, their arch-priest.

Cuchulain (aside). Cathbad! What youth is here,
Who dares to speak of Cathbad, his interpreter?
I know that voice, that eye.

Fand. Whose? Do they anger thee?

Cuchulain. Their menace cannot harm. But there is sorcery

In the boy's voice, a trouble which I needs must share,
And makes me sad at heart. It is ill to leave the air
Where one was suckled.

Fand. Thou art weary grown of us.
Thou lackest thy companions, thy days glorious
With thine own human kind. Thou art weary grown of all.

Cuchulain. Not weary, sweet, of thee,—but of this festival.

What was his word of Cathbad?

Fand. There is a presence here
More potent than the boy's.

Cuchulain. There is thunder in the air.
It is the sea-storm gathering.

Labraid. Young poet, sing again,
And put aside thy sorrow for the sons of men.
The high gods do not grieve. They have no cause for tears,

Being aloof from time and the avenging years,
Even as we the Undying.

Eithne. They are aloof from that
Which is more fierce than time. They neither love nor
hate,

They are absolved of passion and the turbulent sting
Of that which hurries man to his own undoing,
Even as you the Undying ?—Out and alas, Labraid,
Can you see nothing here ? Are your eyes so in shade
That you see nothing ? Nothing ?

Labraid. What, then, dost *thou* see ?

Eithne (then turns to CUCHULAIN, who becomes troubled
while she sings).

Song (continued).

I see a flame of fire
On the hill,
The trees aglow.
When the breeze was still
It was lit by the hand of a child,
By the guile of a woman's will,
The wile of a woman that smiled,
And a man's desire.
Woe to the forest, woe !

I see a man among men,
Proud of his might
In fight
When the trumpets blow.
Who shall withstand his ire ?
He is bound as a hound with a chain.
He is bound to a stranger's eyes.
Fool is he that was wise,
He has earned his hire.
He shall go where they bid him go,
[*They rise and expostulate*

Cuchulain. It is Eithne and none other. What would she seek here ?

Fand. Eithne ? A woman ?

Cuchulain. Ay.

Fand. What is she, then ?

Cuchulain. A seer.

Fand. A woman who once loved thee ?

Cuchulain. Hush ! She begins again.

It is to thee she turns.

Fand. Ay. As a soul in pain.

Eithne (turns to FAND and sings).

A fair woman's face I see.

Is it a rose, or snow,

Or a tear is she ?

Nay, but the rose is a briar,

The snow is trod in the mire.

Her lover is proved a liar.

And the tear ? Ah, me !

The sweet, sad, pitiful tear

Of the eyes that know.

Woe to the woman, woe !

[*The whole of the company rise up in indignation against EITHNE. FAND and CUCHULAIN interpose on her behalf. There is tumult on the stage, and MANANNAN raises his harp high above his head, as if imposing silence. A low sound of thunder is heard.*

Fand (who alone recognises him). "Manannan !

ACT III

(At Baile's Strand. EMER with her women attendants armed. They are grouped beneath a yew tree. All around is desolate. A view of hills, the sea hard by.)

Emer. This is the place, Baile's Strand—and time—the fortieth day,

Since he went forth with her—that sorceress—on his way
To his new mad adventure. Yet it was best. My mind
Is confident of this, and he will come back kind,
And eager as of old. How glorious the world is,
Clothed as it is to-day, with these glad promises,
In spite of the black winter. Winter is best for us
Who are no longer babes—ungraced, but glorious
With its wild gleams of joy illumining the sea.
To-day he will return. This thing she promised me,
A home-coming to-night—who knows, a honeymoon,
In spite of my fool rivals. See you none coming?

[She looks towards the sea.

Attendant.

None.

The sea mist drives too thickly.

Emer.

Nor on the moor? Hard by!

Now, surely there were voices?

Attendant,

It was the plover's cry.

Emer. Your ears are dull to-day. My own are prescient
Of something brave at hand, of a new grand event,
Which shall repay all sorrows. What was it she said,

That crone, for my consoling while I watched his bed
In the Speckled House and wept? A wise wife wins,
it was.

A wife wins against all, and all things come to pass
For her that shall have patience. The rest come and go,
Are smiled on, and pass smiling; but the true wife; no,
She triumphs in her tears;—and in the end he lays
His tired head in her lap, and turns on her his face,
Though it be only dying. If I could hold him thus,
At last, if only thus!

Attendant. There is one approaching us,
A woman and alone.

Emer. A woman? Old or young?

Attendant. Her path is from Emain. She has let loose
her tongue,
And calls to us aloud. She is weeping.

Emer. Who is she?

Attendant. Nay. It is one we know. It is Eithne.

Emer. Let her be.
You shall not speak to her. What does the woman here,
Thus once more on my path, to stand my challenger
In face of all, and him—and on this day of days?
I hate the girl's white face and her fair love-sick ways,
And her mad songs and tears. Stand close.

(*Enter EITHNE, who is walking wildly as if in a dream.*)

Eithne. Have you seen him?

Attendant. Whom?

Eithne. The man who is bewitched, your hero. Is there
room
For more than one in the world? Cuchulain. Of your
grace,

Friends, tell me of Cuchulain.

Emer. Woman, hold your peace.
There are none here your friends,

Eithne. I have seen it in the air.
 There has been a battle lost. He won once. I was there.
 I saw him smite Eochaid and the confederate foes,
 And later, in his triumph. But to-day, who knows ?
 Look at the eagles soaring.

Emer. Pass upon your road.
 We have no news of a fight. For evil or for good,
 Pass on your road. Away !

Eithne. I fear harm by the sea,
 If he should have met Manannan. His first victory
 Was in the hills afar, where the King's power was weak,
 But here Manannan rules. He has the strength to wreak
 His vengeance on Cuchulain, since he knows all.

Emer. All ? How ?

Eithne. Manannan rules the sea. The storms before him
 bow

As servants to his nod. He has the magic wand
 That brings them in their cohorts thundering on the land.
 None may withstand him here.

Emer. And he seeks what ?

Eithne. His wife,
 Who has defied his power, and is a cause of strife
 In all the Fairy realm to all the world—and thee.

Emer. To me. I will not listen. Pass on thy way.

Eithne. Nay, see
 The eagles overhead. They watch death from afar.
 It shall be a day of trouble.

Emer. Go, then, seek thy war.
 But trouble me no further. Out of my sight, begone
 Ere it be worse for thee (*threatening her*).

Eithne. Nay, I go quickly.

Emer. Run.
 Lest I should smite thee, girl.

Eithne (*frightened*). Ah, whither ?

Emer. Where thou wilt.

Follow thy birds, not me, lest thy fool's blood be spilt,
For my wrath rises at thee. (*Aside.*) Yet my mind
misgives.

She presages an ill. (*To EITHNE.*) The man you look for
lives.

Follow your birds. Away !

Eithne.

I will go down to the sea

And watch for what befalls.

Emer.

Ay, and go warily.

If Manannan be abroad. (*Exit EITHNE.*) She, too, is on
the quest

Crazed with her love of him, her heart sore like the rest,
Ready to kneel ; to adore. Yet, why should we thus
make

Our lives a cup poured out for men's mad pleasure's sake.
This Eithne is a fool. But the wisest wins no more
Than just her stake, their tolerance. We all count it store
If we can hold them with us for some years in chain—
Some years, some months, some days. Our wisdom is in
vain.

They always are our masters, since love binds us still,
And we wait on, their slaves, rough ride us as they will,
Hating each other for it with an insensate hate.

O, women, you are fools. And yet, and yet, and yet—
Settanta comes to-day. (*To ATTENDANTS.*) Is there still
nothing ? There !

That was a strain of music, not far off, an air
Like the Fairy chaunt, most sweet, yet ominous withal.
They are bringing him in triumph.

Attendant.

— It is a festival.

They are coming from the hill.

Second Attendant.

A single voice it is ;

A single woman's voice.

Attendant.

I hear the cadences

Of another with her, a man.

Emer. It is his voice. (*FAND is heard singing.*)
And hers ?

It is not Eithne's. Listen. See that no one stirs
A hand or foot to them. Closer, I bid you, maids.
I bid you closer yet and hide you chattering heads.
We will watch them as they come.

[*They stand behind the tree.*]

(*Enter CUCHULAIN and FAND as lovers. She scatters flowers of faery, singing as they walk. LAEG follows at a distance. and remains in the background as they advance.*)

Fand (sings)—

Song—"O THE DAYS THAT ARE DONE."

O the days that are done,
The days of the fading summer,
Brown leaves and days of brown,
Loves that are scattered and flown
With the whirling leaves from the tree,
When the rain is on land and sea,
And the white mists have hid the sun
From the face of the sad newcomer.

Cease, O rain, from thy tears.
Laugh, winter. I bring thee roses.
Why dost thou weary our ears,
Wind, with thy insolent jeers ?
For lo in love's path I strew
Bell-flowers and bind-weeds blue,
And poppies to ease love's fears,
And ever and always roses.

(*She offers him an apple of love, and sings again.*)

Apples of love, how sweet,
 Love, for thy sake I gather.
 Who that of these shall eat,
 Love's guidance shall guide his feet,
 Love's lightning shall blind his eyes,
 Love's wit shall have made him wise,
 Since laughter is all love's meat.
 And tears shall assail him never.

Cuchulain. Is this the tree you spoke of ?

Fand. It is the tree of Fate,

The goal where all love ends,—a little desolate,
 A little dark and sombre,—like a day that was,
 And cannot be again.

Cuchulain. I do not love its boughs.

Fand. Yet we shall laugh to-morrow.

Cuchulain. We will away from it,
 I will not be made sad. Time shall not part us yet.

Fand. We are time's slaves, not masters,—even we who
 ride

Like kings upon his back, in our joy glorified.

Time bears us royally, but only at his will.

Here he has stopped with us and points towards the hill,
 And bids us down afoot. We have been happy, love,
 Too happy to lament, or weep, or argue of,
 As if love were eternal and our souls our own.

(*Sighs.*) Ah, love is not eternal. (*After a pause.*) You
 will remember Fand,

Who was so sweet to you awhile in a strange land,
 And gathered shells with you, white shells by the lake's
 shore,

And strewed flowers at your feet, and loved you, alas,
 more

Than ever she loved man.

Cuchulain. Now, by the powers that are,

This parting shall not be. Be the day near or far,
We will go on together and confront our fate.
We will love on for ever.

Fand.

Love ? It is too late.

I dare not fail your Emer or be false to her.
This is the tryst I named her, and the hour is near ;
'Tis now that we must part. Ah, if indeed she knew,
She would forgive. Your Emer ! She is wise and true,
The first of womankind, as you, alas, of men.
Cuchulain, have you loved me ? Truly ? Once again
Kiss me before we part (*they embrace*). There, I put on this
veil (*veiling herself*)

And hide myself in ugliness, lest my resolve should fail.
I am now another woman—one she would approve
And whom you could not kiss.

Cuchulain (*drawing aside her veil*). Not yet an instant,
love.

I dare not lose your beauty. 'Tis my strength, my life !

Fand. And thou who art my strength ! It were well to
be thy wife

And not as thus, immortal,—and so lose thee. See,
There are real tears in my eyes, the first Fand's vanity
Has ever shed for man.

Cuchulain.

We will away, sweetheart,

And dwell in your high mountains with your gods, apart
From men and their sad ways. Ah, Fand, I love these tears
Better than all the laughter of your glad god's years,
Though those, too, were my glory. Fand of the fair cheek.
Fand of the passionate eyes. Fand.

Fand.

Speak to me still. Speak.

Tell me in words you love me once more ere I go (*they embrace*).

I will never more love mortal.

Cuchulain.

Nor I woman. No ;

Never while life shall hold me.

[*EMER advances. CUCHULAIN and FAND start apart, FAND veiling herself again hurriedly. LAEG places himself between them and the ATTENDANTS.*

Emer. Cease. This shall not be.
Cuchulain, stand aside. (*To FAND.*) What means this
mummery,

This fooling, this disguisement of a treacherous face ?
Off with these lying weeds ! They hide not your disgrace.
I have seen all and I know. (*She tears off FAND's veil.*)

Cuchulain. Mad woman, hold thy hand.
This lady is protected.

Emer. She is revealed. 'Tis Fand.
Fand's self, and not another—not Fand's messenger,
But just Fand's wanton self. Woe and alas for her !
Woe for our womanhood ! What was it that she said
Of the fair Fairy wisdom, the high lives they led,
These queens upon their mountains, nobler than our own ?
The brave immortal part played by the gods alone
Transcending our poor virtue ? Fand, in the open day,
Stealing our heroes' hearts, as gold is stolen away,
And robbing their lean wits, till they are such as he,
The man who stands beside her ! Fand with her chastity !
Fand with the flower-like eyes ! Fand with the pure proud
face !

Fand like a tear unshed ! O, these bold goddesses !
How like are they to women !

[*EMER rushes on FAND with a dagger. CUCHULAIN seizes her arm. LAEG interposes between them and the ATTENDANTS.*

Cuchulain. Emer ! Once more have done.
This is no place for brawling. Wenches, every one
Stand back—or fear my hand.

Laeg. Back, maids. Have you forgot
The terror of Cuchulain ? Nay, I warrant not,

Or must Laeg teach it you ? To your distaffs, girls, away !
(LAEG drives them out, and they fly screaming.)

[Exit LAEG and ATTENDANTS.]

Cuchulain (alone with EMER, FAND in the background).

Now, by the name of him by whom I swear, to-day
 Shall see an end of it between us two. What rage
 Is this that hath beset thee ? Am I, then, in cage,
 Like a tamed wolf, with thee that thou shouldst hold me
 cheap

And dare me to my wrath ? What harvest wouldst thou
 reap

With thy mad herd of women set thus on my track,
 And thy insane weak hand and the innocuous wrack
 Of thy vain railing words ? Put down that childish steel.
 Its violence does thee wrong.

Emer. Wouldst thou, then, see me kneel

At my foe's feet, Settanta ?

Cuchulain. I would see thee make

Thy face fair to my friends. Nay, coil thee like a snake ;
 Thou shalt not master me.

Emer. Settanta. *(They struggle for the dagger.)*

Cuchulain. Cast it down,

Then we will argue it. I care not, smile or frown,
 So thou obey.

Emer (yielding). I will obey, Cuchulain. There.

I do it at thy word. It flies a messenger *(throwing away her
 dagger)*

To thy foes slain for thee, how many, in past days,
 To tell them I repent ; that henceforth Emer's ways
 Are the ways of a weak girl, of one who strikes no blow
 Even for the man she loves. It is gone—and let it go—
 And with it love and hatred and all pride in thee.

Thou hast enough of maids to soothe thy vanity.

Be they henceforth thy safeguard. I am absolved of all.

Cuchulain. *Emer.*

Emer. I am not thy wife. I am thy slave, thy thrall,
 Even as these others are (*kneeling*). I kneel to thee. I kiss
 The ground beneath thy feet, like them, in ecstasies,
 Entreating and cajoling ; lies upon my lips
 And flatteries on my tongue ; false to the finger tips.
 Is thy wrath satisfied, thou great Sualtim's son,
 Thou hero of the world, thou scourge of Albion,
 King of all kings—Cuchulain ? It is a helot sues,
 No wife to war with thee, to claim rights, to abuse
 Thy too long patience tried. I am thy concubine
 To weep tears on thy bosom ; one so wholly thine
 As to laugh when thou shalt strike her. Strike and thou
 shalt see.

Cuchulain. Emer, enough, rise up. I may not strive
 with thee.

Thou shalt have back thy weapon, were it but for Ferdiad's
 ford,

Where we two stood at bay, thy dagger and my sword,
 We two against all Connaught. Only do thou stay on
 Gentle as once thou wert. What evil have I done
 So great that thou shouldst flout me ? This one is a queen,
 As worthy as thyself ; nor shall she stand between
 Thy pride and our long love, since thou art first and best,
 And a man's heart has needs besides his earliest.

I will call back thy women. [*Exit.*

Fand. Ah ! He loves her still.

Emer. He is subdued and won. His wrath was terrible,
 Yet shall his love make light the anguish of his hand—
 And I—I am weak—weak—weak—

Fand (*advancing*). What would you, then, of Fand,
 Lady, of more account than Fand would freely give ?
 There was no need of menace, of wild words that grieve,
 Of the least ungenerous thought. Gladly would Fand
 consent

To all your asking. Nay. Him you so nobly lent

She came but to restore. Were it her heart's best blood
You should desire of her, 'tis Fand would make it good,
'Tis Fand that would bestow.

Emer. Why did you take this man,
If you so little loved him, for so brief a span—
This man of all mankind? It is an ugly trade
To steal love from another, be you wife or maid,
And you, bride of Manannan. Why have you done this
thing?

Fand. Ah, lady, you have said it. Manannan is a king,
Glorious, and to be feared, and once I loved him well.
I came to him a bride, his chosen one. A spell
He wrought on me to love him, though he in truth was old
And I a child in years, with gifts and manifold
Persuasions of fair words. But now he loves me not,
And lives apart and far, and I am clean forgot,
And see his face no more. Brave suitors came to me
How many, with their loves? Yet I loved chastity
More than them all, and said them nay, how oft, how long
Nor would I be consoled, though I had suffered wrong,
Until the day you know of. Then I heard of him,
Your hero who was sick, and idly in a whim
Of pity I came to you. We Sidhe have a rule
To love anew each Spring, and I was named a fool
For my long continence, and when I saw his face
I knew his cure lay only in my arms' embrace,
And my cure in his arms. If I did wrong to you,
See, I repair it well. I give you your full due,
Your hero sound and whole.

Emer. And is that all your creed?
Is that your Fairy wisdom? For one evil deed
To do a deed more evil? For a love disdained
To take another love, and count the loss regained?
How is your anger vanquished? How is your grief
avenged?

Does your wound hurt you less because your bed is changed ?
Can pain be cured by killing ? Out on your Fairy faith.

Fand. Emer, we are not as you, who have not, as you,
death

To be our full consoler, nor the calm of age
To make our griefs grow less and our sick souls more sage.
We may not be thus fixed who are for ever young,
And so for ever sentient. He who does us wrong
Needs at our hands, and swiftly, his full punishment,
And we, who grieve love lost, to be less innocent,
Lest we should weep eternally eternal tears.
And so our loves grow wanton. You, with your short
years,

May dare more constancy. We always must forget,
Nor venture to love wholly, lest we smart for it
Beyond our power to endure. Our loves are like the flowers
We gather in your meadows in our idle hours
And hold them in both hands, and yet as soon let go.
'Tis on their scent we live, the sweetness that we know
Too well to leave untasted. Time is full of blossoms,
And full of wild sweet loves we press to our sad bosoms,
And are revenged and happy and find life again.
Your world is our rose garden and its flowers your men.
I did not mean to wrong you. What shall I say more ?

Emer. And you now love him ?

Fand. Surely. Yet think not therefore
I am less true to you. You are a happy woman,
A woman happier far than I who am less human.
I would not keep him from you. He is yours to-day—
To-night—I promised it ; and I will go my way
Where none shall learn to follow, and so keep my word.
Alas, my grief, my grief ! (*She weeps.*)

Emer. Nay, I forgive having heard.
And women need forgiveness. We are all weak. We stand,
We two, like children lost in a bewitched strange land,

The land of one man's heart, where we alone are kin.
 I grudge you nothing. Nay, why should my heart begin
 Its thankless toil anew of weaving the mad wind,
 Less wild than a man's heart, and when it goes more kind ?
 Let me be given up.

Fand. Not so. Indeed, not so.

I will not stand before you. What is my small woe
 To your wife's right of grief ? It must come in the end.
 I go upon a journey where no soul shall lend
 Its voice of comforting ; but time cures all,
 And our time is eternal, one long festival,
 Where the guests come and go and none of them sits long.
 Long love proves a long weeping and a longer wrong.
 (*Aside.*) Yet it is pity you, Emer of the yellow hair,
 Should leave Fand to her sorrow, and take all her share.

(*Re-enter CUCHULAIN, LAEG, and the WOMEN in disorder.*)

[FAND retires to the back of the stage.]

Cuchulain (*giving EMER her dagger*). Here, take your
 plaything back. It yet may serve a need
 If that be true these tell. What is it, Laeg, they said ?

Attendant. We have seen shapes and shadows terrible to
 men.

Hands which have struck at us. The sea mist in the glen
 Is full of an armed host with tongues that mock at us
 And eyes that flash defiance. There are sounds ominous
 Of hurt in every tree, and angers which speak loud.
 Hark ! Heard you not the thunder ?

Laeg. There is a mighty cloud
 That broods upon the sea and seems a living thing,
 A shadow of destruction.

Fand (*aside*). It is himself, the King,
 Manannan, in his wrath ! He has come to claim his own.

[*Darkness. A loud thunderclap is heard.*

Every one starts aside.

Cuchulain. Laeg. To your arms ! Stand fast ! What was that presence here ?

I felt it on my face, and 'twas no gossamer.

It swept me like a bough. To your arms, Laeg, and strike home !

Take that, and that, and that.

[*He strikes at phantoms in the air, and they both rush about fighting.*]

Women.

We are lost !

A Terrible Voice.

Fand ! Fand !

Fand.

I come.

[*The storm dies away. FAND disappears.*]

Cuchulain. The storm is past,—take courage,—and the foul spectral host

With its lewd apparitions. Is none strayed or lost,

Emer, of all your women ?

Emer.

No one of the band.

We are all here.

Laeg.

Save one

Cuchulain.

What mean you ? Where is Fand ?

Where is the Queen ? Speak out.

Emer.

There was a voice that cried

Aloud to her to come, and would not be denied :

“ Fand ! Fand ! ” I saw her turn, and with her lips apart,
In the great darkness, standing thus, her white hand on
her heart.

She seemed to fade and vanish.

Cuchulain (to EMER).

Woman. What is this ?

What hast thou done with Fand ? Are these thy sorceries ?

Are these thy jealous doings ?

Emer.

It was Manannan's voice

That called on her to follow ; and the rest her choice.

She has gone back to the sea with him. She has chosen
her lot.

Cuchulain. Was I not here, Cuchulain? Nay. She loved him not.

Why should she follow him? It is thy jealous guile
Has driven her out from us. She would not waste a smile
On all the proud Sidhe Kings that ever kneeled to her,
Manannan or another, or one precious tear
From her sweet flower-like eyes on the unpitying sea.
Why should she seek its bosom? Why should she fly
from me?

If you have raised this route, Emer, by Him that is,
You shall see my face no more. Women, take heed of this:
If Fand be not restored there shall no more be seen
A lady in this land to be beloved of men,
Nor any save the reprobate. My hand shall take
Such toll upon you all, such vengeance for her sake,
That you shall grieve you lived. Away with you! Away!
Search by the seas and shores, probe every cape and bay,
And inlet where she lies;—nor come with her again
Save as her slaves and servants.

Laeg. It has turned his brain,
He has grown mad.

[CUCHULAIN is driving them out when EITHNE
enters, carrying a cloak.

Cuchulain. What! A new woman, and not Fand?
Women, you are triflers all, and this is a mad land.
Away, with you! Away!

Eithne. He has forgotten me.

Emer. Speak to him, Eithne, straight, lest he do injury.
Have you seen no woman pass?

Eithne. My grief! I have seen the king,
Manannan of the sea, with his fiend-following.
There was tempest on the beach, and a black multitude
Of shapes upon the waves and cloud which fought with
cloud,
And storm-wind with more storm.

Emer.

No woman ?

Eithne.

There was a queen
Passed down towards the shore new-clothed in the Sidhe
green,

And fair, exceeding fair.

Emer.

What did she ?

Eithne.

She was singing
As those sing who are glad, and to the King's robe clinging
As those cling who are gay and ask what all men give.

Cuchulain. Traitress ! She smiled on him ? You did
not hear her grieve ?

Eithne. The King looked down at her, and her eyes met
his eyes,

And she stopped short in her song, and the tears seemed to
rise

An instant to her lids, and her eyes looked like flowers
With raindrops on their petals when they are caught in
showers

And the sun shining still. Then with a sudden whim,
Even as he stooped to kiss her, she snatched his cloak from
him—

This cloak—and broke away with her white feet to the sea,
Laughing a childish laugh, to where I stood, while he,
Pale in his rage, stood there and cursed as she fled on
Unharm'd to the sea's brink, spite of his malison.

And passing me she dropped the mantle, while they all
Pursued her through the waves which rose to meet them
tall

As a ship's side, it seemed,—or may be 'twas a ship
Tall as a wave. And there the whole dark fellowship
Mounted in haste with her, while the mist shut them in,
And the wind's roaring drowned their voices' impotent din,
Which suddenly grew still. For she, as she left the cloak,
Cried, " Shake it in their faces." And I stood up and shook
The robe as she had bidden, and the ocean's roar

Ceased, and the waves dropped down and fawned upon the shore,

Like spaniels at the lash, while through the silence came
A last word of command, and she named Cuchulain's name,
And cried, "Go back to him and tell him, with my kiss,
It is Manannan's robe of full forgetfulness.
Shake it before Cuchulain; it shall cure his hurt."

Laeg. It is the robe of power, Manannan's magic shirt,
The healer of all sorrow.

Cuchulain. Were it a robe of death,
Yet shake it in our faces. That which quickeneth
Shall it not also kill?

Emer. Ay, Eithne, for us all,
We need it sore each one, since each of us is thrall,
Of his own happier past, which asks to be forgot.
Shake it in all our faces. Shake it. It matters not
Whether it was good or evil, pain or lesser pain.
The past is only sorrow.—O to begin again
With a clean memory, purged alike of love and hate!

Cuchulain. We are grown weary all, and death is to
forget.

[EITHNE sings, waving the cloak slowly to and
fro, and becoming more animated in the last
verses. At the end of verse two the stage,
which has gradually become lighter, shows
full sunlight, while the countenances of all
grow gay.]

Song—"AWAY, THOU THIEF."

Away, thou thief
Of the world, Grief!
Tears, away, both of pain and pleasure!
We have had enough
Of the things of love.

We have weighed our days, and have proved their measure.
For Love, the master,
Has brought disaster,
Through running faster
Than feet could follow.
Our need is grievous
He here should leave us,
To dream without him in hill and hollow.

Better it is,
In a world like this,
Where years deceive, and no day is sure.
Where Love is cruel,
And friends are fuel,
To end than mend what we cannot cure.
For Love, the master,
Runs ever faster,
And brings disaster
On all that follow.
Why should he grieve us ?
Nay, let him leave us,
To breathe more freely on hill and hollow.

Shine sweet sun,
On a day begun,
As of childhood won from the ways of sorrow.
All that was pain
Has become our gain,
Like a night of rain on a cloudless morrow.
For Love, the master,
Has brought disaster,
Through flying faster
Than feet could follow.

Here shall he leave us,
Since need is grievous
Of rest more blest upon hill and hollow.

This cloak I shake
On the eyes that ache,
They shall sleep, then wake to a new sweet silence.
The storm's distress
In forgetfulness
Shall grow less and less in life's wiser islands.
For Love, our pastor,
No longer master,
Shall bring disaster
On none that follow,
Nor he deceive us
As once, nor grieve us,
While we go free over hill and hollow.

CURTAIN.

THE BRIDE OF THE NILE

AN EXTRAVAGANZA

IN THREE ACTS

(First acted privately, August 23, 1893)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Makawkas, Prince of Egypt.

Barix, the Roman Governor.

Alexis, his Son.

Boilas, his Official Secretary.

Benjamin, a Samaritan.

Hátib, the Caliph's Envoy.

Amru, Emir of the Saracens.

Coptic Patriarch.

Belkís, Daughter of the Makawkas.

Jael, Daughter of Benjamin.

Courtiers, Priests, Magicians, Citizens, Roman
Soldiers, Arabs, Servants, etc.

ACT I

Governor's Palace at Alexandria.

ACT II

Garden House of the Makawkas at On.

ACT III

On the Banks of the Nile.

Time, 7th Century, A.D.

THE BRIDE OF THE NILE

ACT I

GOVERNOR'S PALACE AT ALEXANDRIA

ALEXIS, *a young man, a dandy, is seated alone at his desk looking through official correspondence. He opens a private letter languidly, then, with a look of vexation.*

Alexis. It is time I made a change. My father says it.

Yes,

It is folly to go on. Love holds me less and less,
And I am tired of all life gives us in that way.
These Alexandrian maids amuse one for a day.
But there are things in life of larger interest
Even than unbought love, the passionatest and best.
I am tired of Jael's tears. It is always the same tale,
I know it every word—the indestructible
Devotion of her soul—it always is her soul—
To an ideal man, sublimely beautiful,
Sublimely wise and good,—and christened with my name,
In compliment, no doubt, to all that I least am,
With hints that I should wed her. Yes, I know it all—
Her raptures, her remorse, the things past recall,
The hardness of my heart, the vow she now will make
Of being a fool no more—with firm intent to break.
Her letters! Oh, I know them. I want something fresh,
A new sea for my nets, and those of larger mesh.
New worlds to win—male worlds—not women's.

(*Reads the letter.*) Ah, just so,
 Exactly as I thought—"a new absorbing woe,
 Added to all the rest"—"a last and fatal stroke
 Which separates our lives." No, no. She is in joke.
 She talks of "an espousal," of herself as "bride."
 To whom? To what? Good heavens! Religion?
 Suicide?
 What does the woman mean? But I am "to hear all
 soon,
 On Monday next." To-day! This very afternoon!
 Here! At the Prefecture, in my "official heaven"—
 What monstrous foolishness—"in hope to be forgiven
 If she still claims my aid." I understand this word,
 But she will not find me here. The nest without the bird,
 That is our wisest course in cases of the kind.
 And yet it worries me, her marriage? Am I blind?
 Who, who can the man be? If she should prove untrue,
 This Jael after all? O women! None of you,
 Not one of you then constant! Even Jael! No, no;
 It would be too base of her,—though perhaps better so.
 But see, my father comes.

(*Enter BARIX, announced by SERVANT.*)

Servant.

The Prefect, sir.

Barix (heartily).

Dear boy.

I find you at your desk. This is indeed a joy.

You will live to be my comfort. Well. What news?

Yes, yes.

Our famous draft is ready?

Alexis (looking puzzled). Which?

Barix.

His Highness'?

Our note to the Makawkas. (*He takes up JAEL'S letter.*)

Alexis.

No sir. No, not that.

This is the document (*giving another paper*).

Barix (reading).

In high affairs of State

Use the third person. Right. The Makawkas is a prince
With whom we can do much by show of deference.

Yes, a good draft, quite good.

(*In a pompous voice.*) I think we have made clear
Now, even to their dull wits who read the circular,
That Rome must be obeyed. How childish it all is,
Alexis, after all, this prate of policies,
This tenderness for forms and antiquated shams,
When all the force is ours. We have played too long with
names ;

It is time we came to facts. A veiled authority
Was well in the past years. But now with this decree
We shall take stronger ground. Rome has too much on
hand

To trifle with loose ways of action and command,
Too high a duty. Here in Egypt more than all
We need to prove our strength, to be equipped, like Saul,
Taller than all our brethren, with the actual show
Of kingship in the world—since Heaven has willed it so,
And given us this high mission for the world's more good.
Rome's task will be achieved with the whole Nile subdued,
Its tribes reclaimed to law, its wealth to revenue,
Its idle hands to toil. Here is good work to do
For all our officers.

Alexis. Good work, yes, and good pay.

Barix. Good trade, too, for Rome's millions clamouring
day by day

To Caesar for more bread. And Caesar's will must wait
Forsooth on the Makawkas ! the machine of State,
On the dull childish whim of a blind Coptic prince,
Sad phantom of the Pharaohs, left us for our sins
By the too tender conscience of Heraclius !
No, no. This draft shall teach them that no noise nor
fuss

Can drive us from our course of large humanity

Towards a suffering world. Alexis, they shall see
That Barix overbears.

Alexis (aside). He does it well.

Barix. There, there,
You shall take it him yourself. It will need all your care
To get the Prince to sign it. Though his wit is dense,
He is apt to be suspicious. Give him the general sense,
Or read it in translation—an old trick, but one
That very seldom fails if at all deftly done.
It helps you to make light of phrases indiscreet,
And screens you if detected. You must use your wit,
And your good feeling too—to give it just that turn
His jealousy demands. If he refuse blank, burn,
But do not leave the Note. Of course, you understand,
Our ways are above board. We like an open hand,
Best where we safely can. He knows the Roman word
Is never given in vain.

Alexis (aside). Oh, never.

Barix. Let him see
Rome is his truest friend.

Alexis. Of course. Most certainly.

Barix. Tickle his fancy too. He likes our horse races,
Our football, our gymkhanas. Show him your manliness,
Talk of the cup you won—where was it? These things tell
Much with the native mind. It will make him tractable.

Alexis. I will talk of the Nile Bride. You know, Sir, the
great show
Announced for Saturday, a thing quite rococo
In its barbarity, all actual tears and rage,
With the chief actress put to true death on the stage—
You should see it, Sir, yourself.

Barix. Well, talk of what you will,
So he but hear you out and be amenable,
And sign. Get the thing signed, and signed with a good
grace.

Were I a younger man. Alexis, with your face
You might work miracles. They say he has a daughter
Not altogether plain.

Alexis. Belkís. She has made slaughter
Of half the Egyptian youth, who are susceptible,
And drown themselves by scores in the Pharaonic well
Her windows overlook. Krenfil has set a guard
To keep them from the place, our Sanitation Board
Objecting formally to these malpractices
On the score of public health. A furlong round, the trees
Were fruited with their corpses. Oh ! she is beautiful,
They say, as a young heifer—the Copt beauty rule—
And sings like Philomel. She knows our literature
From Hesiod to Haggardus, talks a Greek as pure
As Socrates himself, and last year made in verse
A history of the Pharaohs, ancestors of hers.
And then her dancing !

Barix. Ha ! She dances ?

Alexis. Yes, with grace
Transcending, so they tell me, even the Herodias.

Barix. A wonderful young lady ! But, to be serious,
look,

The thing needs all our skill. When first we undertook
To save these bankrupt lands from possible mischance
And claim of the Makawkas Rome's inheritance
I gave you my full mind. I let you see within
The secret springs of power, the pulse of the machine,
And made you share my hopes in this last glorious task
Of my life's public toil. I drew aside the mask,
And showed you my ambition, all that I designed
Of honour for Rome's name, uncabined, unconfined,
In African dominion. And for ourselves—ah, well,
There, too, we had our hopes, high set, impregnable.
I sent you to Byzance. You saw the Emperor.
He listened and approved. You crossed the official door

Which leads to dignities and places largely paid.
 You came back my sub-Prefect. Your career was made.
 Yet you were grateful. Yes, Alexis, you, my son,
 Were worthy of my pride. I felt my fight half won,
 An Empire in my hand. All that remains now is
 To put our final stone upon the edifice.
 It lies here in this draft. If the Makawkas signs,
 The government is ours. In practice he resigns ;
 And we, I, you in turn, mere simple citizens,
 Reign with the Pharaohs, kings by grace of Providence,
 And our high Emperor's will and the great name of Rome,
 Accepted as crowned heads by all in Christendom.
 What say you to it, boy ?

Alexis. Father, you may count on me
 In such a noble work.

Barix (with emotion). We will set Egypt free,
 And make her the first realm of all the Roman State,
 A model to the Nations, rich, regenerate.
 This hardly is ambition. Duty were a name
 Truer to call it by.

Alexis (aside). The two things are the same
 In all the lexicons our honest statesmen use.
 He is a past phrase-master. Yet I share his views.

Barix. But why thus count our chickens ? We have
 work to do.

You go to the Makawkas, you, Alexis, you,
 With your fine air of candour. He is a gentleman,
 And will not dare to show it, even if he doubts your plan.
 Yet to make doubly sure, address the lady.

Alexis. Sir ?

Barix. Oh, in the way of honour, Caesar's officer
 Must come with fair proposals, and a son of mine
 I trust with honest purpose.

Alexis. What ? As Valentine
 To the brown beauty ? Her ? Belkís ?

Barix.

My son, even so,
As Valentine to one whose hand, if not of snow,
Will bring him a white fortune and a Viceroy's crown.
Alexis, you are not a mere light-headed clown,
Like most of our young Romans, boys who strut and brawl
And ballyrag the natives, holding one and all
Slaves to their wit, forsooth, because of a dark skin.
You have a higher sense. You hold each citizen
Equal before the law and our great Emperor's eye,
Be he of shade or shape what Heaven has made him. Why,
This lady is a princess. In her veins there runs
The blood of all the Pharaohs. She shall breed you sons,
Each one of them a prince. And you hold back?

Alexis (hesitating).

Why, no.

I had not thought to marry yet a year or so.

The idea perplexes me. (*Aside.*) And Jael? Good God,
and Jael?

What will she say to it? Yet I forgot the tale
Of her own marrying—that makes the danger less.
(*Aloud.*) Sir, I will think it over in all carefulness,
And let you know to-night.

Barix.

Not now? Why, 'tis a chance
To jump at in the dark, to seize with your two hands.
A kingdom pocketed! a noble service done
To Caesar and your country! Think of that, my son.
And give me *here* your word.

Alexis.

Forgive me. I was slow.

Barix. Of course. I knew you would. (*He takes Alexis' hand.*) Shake hands on it. Now go

And do your duty, boy. And Heaven be with you.

[*Exit ALEXIS.*

(*Pompously.*) Thus

Rome marches on her way, humane, victorious!

[*BARIX goes back to his desk.*

And now to common things—the day's work, the routine

Of this great government. Men talk of the divine
 Pleasures of youth. Give me the joys of middle age.
 The age of fifty-two. There stands life's happiest page,
 With honest work each day enough to stir the blood.
 'Tis worth all wine and women, if men understood.
 Here, Boilas (*calling*).

(*Enter BOILAS, a serious young man with an eye-
 glass and a sarcastic manner.*)

Barix. Your report? What of the Provinces?
 We will take the farthest first.

Boilas. My Lord. The Soudanese.

Barix. The messenger, then, has come?

Boilas. He came last night much spent,
 Having killed four dromedaries. The last fell at his tent,
 A mile outside the town, and he was carried in
 Half-dead with the despatches. There, it seems, has been
 Another small affair which has entailed some loss,
 A skirmish at the outposts—half a troop of horse
 Trapped in an ambuscade. Our fellows showed good fight,
 But were overpowered by numbers. With the morning
 light

We got in all the bodies, and identified
 Young Phædo, of the guard, and a score more beside.

Barix. What? Romans?

Boilas. No, Blacks only. Just a small affair
 With the native force.

Barix. That's well. I should not just now care
 To report much Roman bloodshed to Heraclius.
 They are touchy at Byzance with the long incubus
 Of the Moslem raid in Syria. Nothing surer quells
 The warlike itch than life lost. But mere blacks! What
 else?

Boilas. The Nile, my Lord, they write still from all sides
 to me

Gives grave cause for alarm. It is already three
Full weeks behind its time, and even this messenger
From the extremest south had no good news to bear.

Barix. It needs our careful thought.

Boïlas. My Lord, indeed it needs.
Each post brings blacker tidings of the fear that breeds
Like a worm in idle brains. The Copts, in their dull rage,
Already meet and talk. They claim their privilege
Of choosing a Nile bride to pacify the drought.
All Egypt is in turmoil and perplexed with doubt,
Each maiden being in fear lest the lot fall on her.
Already three are named, and every officer
Is deluged with petitions on this side and that
That Rome should intervene.

Barix (pompously). Because the Nile is late
And they are children all and need a mother. Rome
Has a large bosom truly where all woes come home,
Like pigeons to their cote when the kite sweeps the sky.
We are their Providence, to bid them live or die.
Yes, Boïlas, we are great. But, practically, what
Is our best course to take? What say those on the spot?
Have we no precedents?

Boïlas. The last case of the kind
Was in the year fifteen. I have looked it up and find
A mass of correspondence, queries, notes, replies,
With the sub-governors. This human sacrifice
Is a time-honoured right of the Copt heresy.
The girls are chosen by lot, each province sending three,
And sometimes four or five. They must be beautiful,
Well-bred, young, and in health. Strict virtue is a rule
All hold as absolute.

Barix (with unction). Most right.

Boïlas. The ultimate choice
Is left to the Makawkas, as presiding voice,
Who gives away the bride in solemn ritual,

With dirge accompaniment and the Dead March in "Saul,"
 By the Nile bank at On. A barge new-gilt and decked
 From stem to stern with flags, is moored, a derelict
 In the mid-river. To it with banners, fifes, and drums
 They bring the lady down, and the Chief Sorcerer comes
 To crown her with fresh flowers. She is already dressed
 As a bride in white and gold, the sacrificial vest
 Of the old pagan days, with veils that hide her face.
 The Patriarch himself sings the high nuptial mass.
 The keel bolt is withdrawn. The barge is left to sink
 In mid-stream while crowds kneel in prayer on either brink.
 The last case caused some talk, and not a little mirth
 To our officials here beyond its actual worth.
 It was sent home to Byzance, where certain busy fools,
 Tourists in search of facts, had preached it to the schools
 And moved the Patriarch to threaten interdict
 On the score of superstition. They were nicely tricked
 When it came before the Court. The living bride they saw
 Was proved by the defence to be a bride of straw,
 The dummy sacrifice which every year we make,
 Even when the Nile is good, for the mere custom's sake.
 The laugh was turned on them, and those here had their
 way.

The pageant was approved.

Barix. And did we not say nay,
 Boïlas, on moral grounds? The girl was sacrificed
 Really in flesh and blood?

Boïlas. The Makawkas was apprised
 Of the finding of the Court, but with a private Note
 Suggesting some reform—a more secluded spot
 Was ordered for the function, should the case arise
 Again, than just at On under the whole world's eyes.

Barix. Yet it was not condemned?

Boïlas. Why, no. In principle
 The thing was right enough. The ceremony fell

Under the religious head and so beyond our sphere,
As it has since remained. We could not interfere.

Barix. Humph ! Boïlas. That is sad. Think you, we
could not try

This year some further rule, if not full remedy ?

Is it so popular ?

Boïlas. Ah, there, my Lord, no doubt—

The masses like the show and will not do without.

Barix. Yet we might introduce (Well, what do you say
to this ?)

An anaesthetic drug. It much diminishes
The corporal pain of death if duly ministered—
And saves appearances. It sounds, perhaps, absurd,
Yet it is more humane, and we as Romans, should
Stand always to the front in sparing human blood
And human suffering.

Boïlas. I will speak of it, my Lord,

To-night with the Chief Eunuch. One more serious word,
The war news from Arabia and the Caliphate.

Barix. I thought the whole thing done.

Boïlas. Indeed, I fear, not yet.

Our news is less assuring. The fanatic host
Still pushes on in Syria and has reached the coast.
Tadmor is lost to us. The trans-Euphratean towns
Are opening all their gates. A hundred thousand crowns
Were paid last month at Hama for a two years' truce.
Nor is this all of it. The worst and latest news
Tell Antioch beleaguered by these Saracens,
And Kurdan, who was sent in haste to its defence,
At his last hero shifts, with treachery within
And the Emirs without.

Barix. I really half begin

To think the matter serious. They have let things run,
Boïlas, too far ahead. 'Tis time the war was done.

It does not pay with Easterns thus to give them rope ;

They only flout at you ; your patience feeds their hope,
 And they grow fierce as wolves at first sight of your back.
 O, Lord, the fools men are ! Let them come here, the pack,
 And they shall learn of us what Rome's true schooling is,
 When she finds time to strike and chide their childishness.
 Boïlas, it makes me angry.

Boïlas. Would to heaven, 'twere so.

(Aside.) Yet I would not see them here.

[A noise of people outside. BARIX goes to the window.]

Barix. What have we down below ?

A crowd of women folk. Are these the suppliants
 You spoke of in your note ? Let them come in.

(Enter BENJAMIN with JAEL and other women.)

They kiss the hem of BARIX'S coat.)

Boïlas (to JAEL).

Off hands,

Madam. It is the Prefect.

Barix.

Let the women be,

Good Boïlas. *(To JAEL.)* Now, then, speak. Your nation-
 ality ?

Boïlas. The most of them are Copts.

Barix (to JAEL).

And yours, young lady ?

Jael.

Sir,

My Lord ! *(Aside.)* It is his father. Why is *he* not here ?

Benjamin. We are Samaritans. We come to claim that
 thing

Said to be Rome's high gift to all beneath her wing,
 Protection for the weak, justice, to man, to woman.

Barix. Rome is all justice.

Benjamin (aside). Bah ! *(Aloud.)* And to be counted
 Roman.

Barix. Speak on.

Benjamin. These ladies here, my Lord, are innocents.
 They have done wrong to none in actions or intents,
 And are the Emperor's subjects. Wherefore must they die ?

Barix. What is their grievance, then? We are all clemency.

Boïlas (expostulating). My Lord!

Barix (correcting himself). Within our scope, and sit with open ears.

Benjamin. It is the Nile, dread Sir, and the high officers. They have doomed a maid to die this year in sacrifice, And these are of their choice, maidens discreet and wise, Unblemished in their lives and, as you see them, fair.

[JAEI throwing herself on her knees with the rest before BARIX.

Jael. Great Lord, we kneel to you.

Barix (retreating). Boilas, are these aware They should not thus approach me? Ladies, I supplicate.

Boilas (to BENJAMIN). Remember what I warned you.

It is an affair of State.

Bid them control themselves. The Prefect is not moved Thus idly by your tears.

Jael (aside). Has he then never loved That his eyes cannot weep? He has a face like *his*, Half tender and half hard in its imperiousness. It is ill to love a Roman.

Benjamin. One of these three must die, My Lord, if you withhold your promised clemency. I am an old man. See. This child is my sole staff Of comfort in the world, the thing which makes me laugh Each morning in my tears. O great Lords, look at her In her fresh womanhood, so innocent, so dear. Look at her cheeks, her eyes.

Barix (aside, and coming forward to the front with emotion).

I once saw a gazelle
On the Sakhara plain, a lone secluded dell,
With scattered thorn bushes, a green sweet paradise
In the chaotic waste, brown pebbles and blue skies,
And with her her one fawn. My greyhound gave them chase,

And holding a good start made short work of the race,
 And had the fawn by the throat, a bloody strangled heap,
 Before I could say "off," that just before could leap
 A dozen yards at a bound. The old doe, bleating by,
 Refused to leave the spot, but lingered piteously,
 Running this way and that till the hound had her too,
 And both had got their death who but an hour ago
 Were the beauty of the place, and filled it with strange life.
 Then I was grieved for them. The sand about was rife
 With little marks of feet, and round the bushes still
 I saw where they had nibbled at their idle will
 Only that happy morning always two and two.
 It almost made me weep. (*He weeps.*) Boilas, could we
 not do

Some bountiful high act to stop this savagery ?
 Could we not intervene ? This Nile bride seems to be
 A purely pagan custom handed down from days
 Strange to our Roman morals and humaner ways.
 I am inclined to spare.

Benjamin. These Romans, then, have hearts ?
 He seems about to yield.

Boilas. My Lord, you have more parts
 Than that of prince to play. The girl's is a hard case.
 But where is there not hardship in these modern days ?
 And if we stopped to think each time where the wheels go,
 How should we drive the State machine at all ? No, no,
 We may not make exceptions on mere sentiment.
 Of course, Sir, you know best. Only I must dissent.

Barix. Boilas, you do me wrong. But might it not
 perhaps

Be a wise policy, a feather in our caps,
 Here to protect the weak ?

Boilas. I fear not with the strong
 Whose privilege it is to make things right or wrong.
 Think of the priests and elders. Why, for one of these

Women who come to you with their small miseries,
 There are an hundred men, all taxpayers, who look
 To the State's Chief for aid. Not one of them would brook
 Infringement of their right. The superstition is
 The Nile flood will not rise without the sacrifice.
 And if you intervene to baulk them in their fears,
 You have a hornet's nest at once about your ears.
 There, listen in the yard. [*A noise below.*]

Barix. What is it ?

Boïlas. A procession
 Headed by drums and fifes. They escort the chief magician
 And all the highest priests of the Copt heresy,
 In State towards our doors.

Women. O save us. We must flee.

Jael. How ? Whither ?

Benjamin. They are come to claim these women here
 For their Nile butchery. Save them, great Lord. Declare
 In the high name of law that all men in your hands
 Are safe while innocent. These are Rome's suppliants.
 Cast over them Rome's robe. Bid forth the Pretorian
 Guard.

Arrest the ringleaders. Keep them in watch and ward,
 And hold them from their prey.

Barix. 'Twere noble thus to do.
 How say you, Boïlas ?

Boïlas (with indignation). Risk the Empire ? For a Jew ?
 Look at the enormous crowd. Think of Rome's precedents,
 A thousand years of fame, built up—on sentiments ?
 No, but on principles. My Lord, this should not be.
 Let the law take its course.

Barix (bewildered). Good ladies, were I free,
 I gladly would befriend you. But, alas, your case
 Is not my own to judge, but the Makawkas',
 I may not intervene. *(He points to the window.)*
Speak to them, Boïlas. Say :

(*Stammering*). "The Imperial word once given, not now,
nor yesterday,
But generations since, in spite of change holds good.
We leave all to His Highness—be that understood—
Only commending mercy." (*To the ladies.*) No, I hear no
more.

Ladies, I am your servant. By this postern door,
You issue through the garden. Be advised. Go home.
You have my tears.

Benjamin. And you the curse of the poor, O Rome !

CURTAIN.

ACT II

Garden House of the Makawkas at On.

ALEXIS and BELKÍS are found seated under a verandah, with a palm garden in the background.

Belkís. Come, come, Alexis, come. Look up. Why should I take

Such trouble to be gay and keep us both awake,
If you are only dumb? You have sat the morning through
And have hardly said a word. What would you have me do?
My father has arranged it. I have given consent.
We are to marry soon.

Alexis. But when?

Belkís. Oh, after Lent,

Perhaps at Whitsuntide. We will see when the time comes.

Alexis. Why not at Easter? Say.

Belkís. I cannot do these sums

So long before the date. In the meanwhile talk to me.

I want to be amused. Life will go drearily

If we are to be like this. Let us play at something—chess,

Or draughts, or dominoes. Ask me a thing to guess—

An intellectual game.

Alexis. Belkís! in mercy, no.

I will not try again. (*Aside.*) I cannot run that show,

I played with her last night. She made a fool of me,

In prose first, then in rhyme. Mere raving lunacy,

That will be the end of it. (*Aloud, with sentiment, offering*

to embrace her.) You know what I would have.

Belkís. Nonsense, my noble Lord. I am not yet your slave.

Besides, my hand is brown.

Alexis (expostulating). Belkís !

Belkís. You know it is.

Alexis. I swear by all the gods it is divine to kiss.

Belkís. You are really too absurd. I am a native girl, With a natural fuzz-head I cannot keep from curl, And you a white sub-Prefect. Faugh ! Ridiculous ! Come, shall I sing to you ? But do not make a fuss If it is not quite Greek music. Say, what shall it be ?

Alexis. A melancholy lilt without much melody. You know how I adore your Coptic monotones With their little quiver-quavers, and their little ups and downs.

See, here is your rebáb.

Belkís (taking her rebáb and tuning it, fiercely).

You will not like it much,

If you understand the words. [*She plays a prelude.*

Alexis. You have a glorious touch.

Belkís (aside). How foolish the man is. Hush—hush.

[*She sings.*

Song—"IF I FORGET."

If I forget !

Ah, no, not thee my love.

There is no room for that while wounds are wet ;

And dead lips cry aloud to lips that live,

Like birds despoiled still piping in the grove

Against the cruel snarers of the net.

When the sun faints in heaven and the earth tires :

Then shall it be. But not to-day, not yet.

I swear, by all the gods who were our sires,

Not to forgive and never to forget.

If I forget !

Ah, no. It is not thee.

What art thou to me but an idle debt,

Paid by the dead past to the days that live,

The past of kings whose slaves were like to thee,

The past of glories and a sun long set ?

When the Earth wakes in thunder and mad fires,

Then shall it be. But not to-day, not yet.

I swear by all the Gods that were my sires,

Not to forgive and never to forget.

Alexis.

Quite beautiful.

Belkís (aside). What does he know of it ? These Romans
are too dull,

Too full of their own selves to know the worth of song.

The sweetest songs are those where men have suffered wrong.

And I am to marry him ! For reasons of high state,

My poor blind father says—one whom we Copts all hate,

One of these Roman Lords with their high insolence,

And love and honour him ! The pitiful pretence !

I have taken his pride down a little, though, already,

And taught him what was due at least to one young lady.

Yes, he is tame enough. I will give him one more chance.

(*Aloud.*) You have heard me sing, Alexis. Now you must
see me dance.

Alexis. Indeed, it will be a treat.

Belkís.

You must stand up with me

And take your part in it. And do it cheerfully,

Not like a galley slave. There, stand in front and make

Signs with your arms like this. Look pleased, for mercy's
sake,

Whatever you may feel. And follow with your eyes

As I dance round you—thus.

Alexis.

These are the mysteries

They used to call of Isis.

Belk's. Yes, a country dance.
 He is too plain a fool to know the difference.
 There, that is pretty well. [*They dance.*]
Alexis. Stop, mercy—stop. I am dead.
Belk's. No, no, a little more. [*They stop.*]
 Alexis, when we are wed,
 You shall dance like this all night. There, kiss my hand,
 just once,
 To show you are in love. And do not be a dunce.
 I will teach you more next time.
Alexis (aside). If this is Coptic love
 I had rather be with Jael, who put me to less proof.
 Poor Jael! Poor, quiet Jael! Your love was a sweet
 dream,
 Kinder than this.

(*Enter the MAKAWKAS—he is blind—with his suit.*)

Belk's. My father.
Alexis. Now for our further scheme.
Makawkas. Leave all the windows open. What a sweet
 scent comes in!
 Not one of them must be shut. I know what the fields
 mean
 When I smell the beans in flower. It is not all pure loss
 This blindness of my eyes when I am gladdened thus.
 Is that you here, my child?
Belk's. Yes, father, at your side,
 Ready to read to you, to talk.
Makawkas. What, you a bride?
 You are too busy now; too happy, is it not?
 How glorious it must be to love in such a spot.
 This once was Pharaoh's garden. Potiphar lived here,
 The Captain of the Guard and Pharaoh's officer,
 And Joseph in these walks, as you, my child, now do,
 Wandered the morning long and heard the wild doves coo.

I like to live with them in thought and circumstance
Near their own pyramids—one scene in the romance
Of their six thousand years. And you? What else can
you

Find time, in spite of love, for your poor sire to do?

Belkis. I will sing to you and dance. You know you
love the beat

My steps make, and the wind my skirts whirl and my feet.

Makawkas. This is no time to dance. Our age is too
sedate.

Will you advise me, child, on high affairs of state?

Belkis. Yes, father. (*Aside.*) He is here, Alexis,
listening.

Makawkas. Is he not one with us?

Belkis. The tamest asp may sting.

Makawkas. Alas! she loves him not. (*Aloud.*) My
Lord Alexis.

Alexis. Sir?

Makawkas. How goes it in your world? The High
Commissioner,

Your father, is he well? How of the provinces?

Is there good news from Homs? Are Caesar's enemies

Vanquished and pacified? Has the Nile risen not yet?

We in this garden here, remote from the world, sit

And hear the water-wheels turn round with their long drone,

And half forget the rest, our lost dominion,

Our day of glory gone. Some say there is distress.

Alexis. Not yet, but grave concern. The long formalities
Of the Dual Government, to sign and countersign

Each order with two hands, your Highness' and mine—

Mine in my father's place—delay the public work,

And aggravate the ill. But neither of us shirk

A fraction of our duty, and we trust to bring

All to a pleasant end. Your Highness is the spring

Of the great State machine. We Romans are the wheels,

And where there friction is we need to grease our heels
And show ourselves alert. My duty, sir, these days
Has been a happy service.

Makawkas. She deserves your praise,
Though I, her father, say it, being indeed a child
Worthy a wise man's love. I am half-reconciled
To what you asked of me. (*Aside.*) If I but knew his
heart!

Alexis. You mean the draft decree. It will relieve in part
The burden on our backs of the Nile Government
And be for all our goods. Your Highness' consent
Will make the matter easy—a mere form, and yet
I would not urge it now save for the oversight
Of things in Syria and the Nile's wayward way,
Which stands in front of us and will not brook delay.

Makawkas. Is it so urgent then?

Alexis. Quite urgent. The Nile Bride
Is just a case in point—one we dare not decide
Of our own competence, yet pregnant with more ill
If left ungrappled with, while with a single will
The whole knot were untied. Your Highness is aware
How the case stands for us, how dangerous, how unfair.
We held responsible, without authority,
You legally the lord, yet neither hand set free
To execute a judgment should it chance to clash
With the mad popular voice, to oppose which were as rash
Perhaps as to consent. The net result of all
A scandalous abuse grown quite phenomenal—
(*Aside.*) That's a well-sounding phrase my father would
approve.

(*Aloud.*) Whereas, the decree signed, all fits like a new
glove.

What say you to it, Princess?

Belkis. These are politics
You must decide yourselves by privilege of sex.

I offer no opinion. But this Nile Bride ? Say,
 What is her history ? Who is she ? Yesterday
 I heard one had been named and was already here
 At On for our approval—gloriously fair
 And full of high resolve.

(After a pause with a change of voice.)

It must be a sweet thing

To die thus for one's country and escape life's sting
 For ever by one act of perfect constancy.
 I envy her her lot.

Alexis (expostulating). Belkís !

Makawkas (expostulating). My child !

Belkís (with enthusiasm). Set free

For ever from life's load, the thought of age to come,
 The laughter one endures, the heart's ache answering dumb
 In bitter self-reproof. If *one*, indeed, must die,
 A fair, a precious one, who stands in the world's eye
 As its most worthy thing ; whom no unhappiness
 Has yet touched—that men know ; who is not loved the less,
 Perhaps, that she loves none ; whose loss would threaten pain,
 More than the bodily pang, to some at least of men :
 If one, indeed, must die—how well to be that one,
 Chosen before the rest, all girlhood's champion,
 With no sad marriage rite, save this with Father Nile,
 To mar the maiden joy of an unmastered smile !
 Oh, the divorce of death ! And better now than after,
 While she can hide her tears, a girl, with a girl's laughter

(Enter SERVANT.)

Servant. A deputation, sir, from his most Holiness,
 My Lord the Patriarch.

*(Enter PATRIARCH, MAGICIANS, and ATTENDANTS ;
 with them JAEL veiled.)*

Belkís. The Bride of the Nile—no less.

Alexis (aside). Her face is veiled, and yet—

Makawkas. Let them approach me close.
 Welcome, your Reverences. I am as the world knows
 An old man and a blind. Whom have you with you here ?
 I seem to hear a step.

Patriarch. A lady's, most dread Sir ;
 She comes a suppliant, to join her prayers with ours
 For the high right to die.

Belkís. She stands here crowned with flowers,
 Father, the Nile Bride's self, a true bride, beautiful
 As any in the world.

Makawkas. Walk, sirs, within.

*[The MAKAWKAS, the PATRIARCH, and their
 suites retire to the back of the stage and seat
 themselves for a formal audience and con-
 verse. BELKÍS takes JAEL'S hand and
 leads her forward to the front of the stage,
 where they sit apart from the rest.]*

Belkís. This stool
 Will do for you and me. Sit down. We will talk alone
 For a few minutes here and let the rest go on.
 I want to know it all, and from yourself. This dress
[She handles JAEL'S robes.]
 Is a most lovely thing, and suits your loveliness
 Exactly. Does it not ?

Jael. It is the old costume
 Of the priestesses of Isis, with the lotus bloom
 Embroidered on the hem, symbol of Eternity.

Belkís. And do you love to wear it, though in the thought
 to die ?

Jael. I am not afraid of death. Life is too sad a thing
 To make its loss a grief. Death is the ransoming
 Of many captive tears.

Belkís. You are unhappy then ?
 Perhaps you have learned the truth, the worthlessness of men.
 Is it not so ?

Jael. Perhaps.

Belkís. Your lover ? What was he,
Soldier or citizen, of low or high degree,
Wise, foolish, froward, fond ? I find them all alike
Slaves of their own weak wills, too indolent to strike,
Too insolent to spare. Or have you met with one,
The man one dreams about, born for dominion
Over his fellow men, yet to oneself a friend
Tender and wise and true, who seeks no selfish end,
And is content to serve, and in his service wait
The moment of your love, not too importunate
Nor yet too proud to feel ?

Jael. Ah, Princess, you are wise.
I never dared to ask impossibilities.
I think men do not love. At most in their high will
They suffer we should love them and be constant still
Even when they grow cold. And then, perhaps, one day
When other pleasures fail and grief has come their way,
And life of its delights begins to give them less,
They think of us and grieve in a new tenderness.
This was the way I saw it, all I hoped to see.
A pebble, I thought, cast down, by law of gravity
Makes the whole Earth leap up to it ne'er so little.
And so, if I threw too my whole heart, some small tittle
Of love should answer me. I tried it.

Belkís. And what came ?

Jael. A readiness to die. Alexis (*she stops*).

Belkís. Was that name
Your lover's ?

Jael. Did I tell it ? Yes. Alexis knew
Only too well I loved him.

Belkís. Did he not love you ?

Jael. I said men do not love. Perhaps a little while
It soothed his idleness to know there was a smile
Always in wait for him, should his eyes turn my road.

It gave him a light conscience and a sense of good,
And never any pain—no, never any pain.

Belkis. 'Tis plain, my dear, you spoiled him ! 'Tis a
bad way with men.

But tell me all—the end. What happened ? Did he go ?
Was he untrue to you ?

Jael. Alas ! I hardly know,
I think it was ambition and his father's whim
To push his fortunes higher. I always urged on him
His duty as a son and to his own career.
For men need upward flights. It makes them happier.
Only, I never guessed. It was a cruel letter
In which he told me all, the alliance which should better
His fortunes in the world, if I but stood aside.

Belkis. And she ? Who was she then, this un auspicious
bride ?

Did he not tell her name ?

Jael. I did not care to ask.
And then kind Providence set me this other task,
To die a worthy death—for others. It is well.

Belkis. My dear, you shall not die. You shall yet wear
the veil

Of a real happy bride, or I am no Princess here.
You shall wed the man you love, be he thrice officer,
Thrice Roman, thrice sub-Prefect. Come to them with me
And tell them all your tale in its simplicity.
My father will be touched. And he, Alexis, look,
He too is here with them. I was that bride he took
For purposes of State and had proposed to wed.
But not in love. Oh no. Of that be comforted.
There was no love-making—on his side or on mine.
Only a protocol, a treaty we must sign.
They are talking of it now.

[*They rise. The MAKAWKAS and the rest come forward.*

Makawkas.

You say then she consents.

I would not grant it else—and that to all intents
 Her dying injures none ? Her father, the good Jew,
 Yields to necessity and takes a generous view
 Of his own personal loss ? Of this you say you are sure.
 Nor has she special friend whose grief time would not cure,
 Also that one must die ?

Patriarch. My Lord, it is just so.

The land needs its release from this impending woe.
 The Nile is a brave river, bountiful to all,
 Yet cruel in his wrath. His rage we must forestall
 By this one sacrifice of this one precious thing,
 And save thereby the rest, a world from suffering.

Makawkas. 'Tis an old prejudice. Who knows if it be true ?

Patriarch. There are strange rules with heaven, to do and not to do.

Alexis. 'Tis thus they argue it. We did well to stand by
 And leave it to themselves.

Belkis (appealing to Makawkas). This lady shall not die,
 Father, while I live here. She is my suppliant.
 I give her my asylum—'tis no idle vaunt.

[*She throws her robe round Jael.*]

She lies beneath my robe. I take on me her doom,
 My Lord the Patriarch. And you, Alexis, come.
 Look on the face of *her* I leave here in my stead
 To be the wife to you I shall not be. You dread
 To find a stranger's face. It is an idle fear.
 Hers is more fair than mine and more familiar.
 She stands before you. Look. I draw aside the veil,
 (*Aside*). And clothe myself with death.

[*She draws aside Jael's veil and veils her own face with it.*]

Alexis. By all that is holy ! Jael !

Jael. Alexis !

(*A noise is heard without. Enter a MESSENGER.*)

Makawkas. What is this ?

Messenger. My Lord, three Saracens
Stand at the gate without, demanding audience.
They are importunate. They come as nuncios,
They say from their high Caliph—they, the Emperor's foes,
To Egypt their best friend. They stand armed to the teeth,
And proud of countenance, as men who fear not death,
And will not be denied.

Alexis. This cannot be.

Messenger. My Lord,
They are already here, having driven in the guard.

Belkis. Bid them a welcome, father, as ambassadors,
Who knows, perhaps from Heaven, at least no foes of ours.

Messenger. Foeman or friend, they come.

(Enter HÁTIB and other ARABS.)

Alexis. By God ! the savages !

Hátib. The peace of God be with you.

Makawkas. Strangers. With you be peace.

Belkis. Father, these men are kings, lords born for the
world's rule,

Entreat them courteously.

Hátib (aside). Her face is beautiful

As Eve's in paradise.

Makawkas. Be seated, sirs.

Hátib. Our mission

Admits no courtesies till it has found fruition.

We come in the name of God.

Makawkas. In God's name, sirs, speak on.

We listen in respect, returning benison.

Hátib. Thus speaks my Lord the Caliph, servant of the
Lord,

“ To all and sundry princes, wielders of the sword,
Set in authority, and first of all to him
The Makawkas of the Copts, Lord of the later time,

Peace be and salutation. Ay and to all men peace
 Who follow the right guidance. This. And after this,
 Accept ye Islam. God will give it you twofold,
 And save you from the fire. Be not like him of old,
 The Pharaoh whom God slew, lest turning He should smite
 Your kingdom down with you, in mercy infinite.
 O People of the Book, who worship the one God,
 Why will ye serve another? Do ye love the rod?
 We offer you your freedom, as ourselves are free,
 Save only from God's service. In simplicity
 Pronounce the words of Islam. Testify aloud
 'There is no God but God.' "

Belkis.

It is a message proud

To all who bear Rome's yoke, a message to the poor.

Alexis (to the MAKAWKAS). My Lord! This is rank
 treason. Show these men the door.

Makawkas. Have patience, good Alexis. (*To the Arabs.*)

Sirs, we wish you well—

Only for Caesar's right and the imprescriptible
 Allegiance that we owe.

Alexis.

It must not, shall not be.

Belkis. Alexis, you forget. Here the authority
 Lies only with my father. If he choose to give
 Good welcome to this Prince, 'tis not for you to grieve.

Alexis. A Prince! A Mountebank!

Hâtib.

Be silent, infidel,

Lest I should send thee straight by the red road to Hell.
 (*To Belkis.*) Lady, may God befriend thee on the day of
 wrath.

Alexis. Princess, I take my leave. This champion of the
 faith

Is better here than I. And you, my Lord, take note,
 I raise a formal bar and protest on the spot
 Against these men's reception as most treasonous
 To Rome's imperial name and personally to us.

I hold you to your act in its full consequence—

(*Aside.*) Whatever that may mean—and warn you and
this Prince

That Rome will stand no trifling.

Belkís.

Be it so.

Makawkas.

My Lord !

Belkís. No matter, father dear. We have this stranger's
word.

And God shall be our shield though all Hell should assail.

Here stands our champion—here.

Hatib (with tenderness).

Lady.

Alexis (turning to go).

Come with me, Jael.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

On the banks of the Nile, a landscape open towards the river, a barge with flags flying in the distance.

(Enter BARIX and BOÏLAS conversing.)

Barix. I always said it, Boïlas, it must come at last,
The day of annexation. Things have moved on fast,
Faster than we quite thought a week or two ago.
The mills of Rome grind slowly—quite absurdly slow.
It comes to the same thing.

Boïlas. This, Sir, is the full text
Of the proclamation issued. Egypt is annexed
To the First Cataract. The Makawkas we depose.

Barix. By his own fault and doing, Boïlas. Heaven
knows
We did our best to spare him. He would take no warning,
But chose to go his way. We have wished him now good
morning,
And shown him to the door. Besides, these crimes of his !
Who would have thought it, Boïlas, blind man that he is,
And quite respectable in all his outward ways,
He should be so black a villain as your report now says ?
You tell me the very day he took our subsidy
He had his cousins strangled, all, to the third degree,
And twelve slaves crucified one Sunday afternoon
For bringing him cold coffee in his state saloon.
And then, the wine he takes ! O, Boïlas, it is strange
How Eastern Princes drink !

Boilas. Yes, when Rome needs a change.

Barix. 'Tis quite a Providence.

Boilas. Indeed a Providence
Provided by the State for its own public ends.

Barix. You do not, then, believe it ?

Boilas. Oh, my Lord, my rule
Is always to believe. I was bred in the old school
Which holds official truth sacred as Holy Writ,
No matter what the fact. I make no face at it,
But swallow it down whole. Rogue, thief, or honest man,
Drunkard, blue-ribbonite—I back the published plan
And add my word of faith to the State legend still.
It is only in raw boyhood that one bites one's pill.
The Makawkas is deposed.

Barix. And what was his demeanour
When you conveyed the news ?

Boilas. His face grew a shade greener,
As a doomed patient's might who feels the surgeon's knife
And knows his hour has come and bids good-bye to life.
But he did not say a word.

Barix. And she, the tragedy Queen,
Belkís, who egged him on ? Did she, too, sit serene ?

Boilas. Serene as a scirocco in the month of March,
Calm as a Khamsin piling heaven to one black arch.
She stood and stared at me an instant, and then said,
“ May the Lord God confound thee in the day of dread.”
She has caught the Moslem jargon, and can curse or bless
With the best Arab of them—a mad lioness.
Some say she is affianced to young bare-legs, him
Who was the Caliph's envoy, Satan's sturdiest limb,
If ever one there was. No matter. Luckily
She is better now disposed of, with more modesty,
As volunteer Nile Bride. We took her at her word—
The best way with such ladies—and so cleared the board.
There was a Hebrew damsel, as it seems, by lot

Chosen to play chief part in their religious plot,
And brought before the Makawkas. The Princess was
there,

And moved with a fine feeling must needs interfere
To save the other's life, giving her own instead
As victim in her place. And so the matter sped,
Not quite, perhaps, in earnest, when we took the reins.
The priests, however, now insist on the full pains
And penalties of her act, and all the more that she
Has openly espoused the Moslem heresy.
It will end for her to-day, here at the river side.
Look, here comes the procession !

[*A noise of shouting without.*

Voices.

Three cheers for the Nile Bride.

Barix. I cannot countenance a thing so barbarous.
Boïlas, my cloak ! Come with me. O Romana jus !
The common law must not be violated now
That Egypt has the franchise.

Boïlas (sarcastically). And let treason grow
Till Egypt is disrupted ! No, my Lord, 'tis well
Things take the turn they do. Let us stand by and tell
Our beads for her soul's sake, if you will, but leave the rest
For Father Nile to purge in the public interest.
Remember, too, Alexis.

Barix. Ha ! that's true. The girl
Was a bit impudent. He was quite out of curl
For a fortnight after it, nor yet is quite consoled.
Boïlas, maybe you are right.

Boïlas. My Lord, she is a scold,
And a dangerous character. Let the priests deal with it.

Barix. Well, well. But here they come. *Boïlas*, maybe,
you are right.

[*Exeunt.*

(*Enter procession of PATRIARCHS, PRIESTS, MAGICIANS,*
etc., with them JAEI and BELKÍs.)

Jael (to BELKÍS). You will not then relent ?

Belkís.

Alas ! dear Jael, no.

Even if I could, I would not. What I undergo
Is little in the sum of the world's bitterness,
Little in the count of wrong. And I will make it less
By thinking of your gain. You must be happy, Jael,
Happy a thousand years, if but to tell the tale
Of one who died too young.

Jael.

Too young ! Ah, you regret

Your beautiful life now, in spite of all the fret,
Of all the sorrow. Look how glorious the sun is,
How wonderful the world. I see tears in your eyes,
I see that you would live.

Belkís (*aside*).

This weakness must not be.

(*Aloud.*) No, Jael, no. These things are not so dear to me
Except for one mad thought.

Jael.

And what is that ? Speak ! Speak !

Belkís. He told me that he loved me, and my heart is
weak

To see him once again. (*She weeps.*) He promised to be
here.

Jael. Hátib ?

Belkís.

Yes, Hátib, he, the Caliph's messenger.

He made his oath to me upon his father's sword,
And in the name of God. Will he not keep his word ?

Patriarch. Ladies, it is time to part. Rome waits on you.
Despatch.

(*Enter ALEXIS with soldiers—on the other side HÁTIB
and Arabs with BENJAMIN. These stand apart.*)

Jael (*clinging to BELKÍS*). My lot is one with hers.

Alexis (*to soldiers*).

Here, bring along the batch

And drive the business through. Is this the sacred barge ?
Where is the Patriarch ? (*To the PATRIARCH.*) I hand
over my charge

To you, most reverend sir. All that Rome asks is this,
The lady's signature to prove her willingness.

Patriarch (showing paper). The signature is here attested
in due form.

Alexis. Then march.

Jael. Alexis, stop. Your heel is on the worm,
Beware lest it should turn.

Alexis. The best way is to crush,
Dear Jael, worms that hate us.

Jael. Or that love us.

Alexis. Tush !

This is no case of love. And, if it were, my duty
Would make me deaf to all, and blind to her and beauty.
You had better now go home. These priests will deal with
her

For her soul's greater good. I, as Rome's officer,
Remain to see it out. But you, my love, go home.

Benjamin (aside). A curse be on his tongue.

Hâtib. A double curse on Rome.

Jael (to ALEXIS). I have no home but hers. If Belkís
weds the Nile

I go with her as bridesmaid. So we may beguile
The pain of death together. Oh, the shame of life !
I would rather die with her than live to be your wife,
Unmerciful Alexis.

[ALEXIS motions the guard to advance. They
come forward to seize BELKÍS. HÁTIB
and BENJAMIN interpose.]

Alexis. Soldiers, stand by me,
Pretorians, to your arms. What is this foolery ?

Benjamin. Most noble Roman lord, your day of arrogance
Ends with this insolent hour. Fate needs to make amends
And needs that you should perish.

Alexis. Seize the crazy rogue,
And send him to the guard-house.

Hátib. Unbelieving dog,
 See, with this sword I smite thee.
[The Arabs rush in—fighting on the stage.]
Alexis. Treason! Help!
[Alexis is wounded.]
 By Heaven,
 These blacks have done for me. *[Dies.]*
Benjamin. Ay, die—and unforgiven.
 Your place is best in Hell. Brothers in arms, fight on.
 To-day shall seal the doom of Rome's dominion.
[Exeunt fighting, all but BELKÍS and JAEI.]

(Re-enter BENJAMIN.)

Benjamin. Now, by the God of Moses, we are avenged
 to-day.
 Our debt is paid in full, the wrongs that made us grey,
 The stripes with which we ached, our hopes so long deferred
 Of an ideal reckoning, insolent word with word,
 Insolent act with act. To see these Roman clowns
 With their long arrogance, who ruled it in our towns,
 Masters and Lords of all, and prated of their law
 As the one saving fact the Eastern world yet saw,
 And of themselves in it as missionaries divine
 Incalculable in blessings, scattering oil and wine
 And lavish wealth on us, with their great Roman peace—
 The impudent imposture—on their bended knees
 To a mere shouting horde of shoeless Ishmaelites!
 O, it is noble!

Jael. Father.

Benjamin. There are sounds and sights
 Dear to Jerusalem, the clamour of death's wings
 After a flying foe, the night which vengeance brings
 Upon a stricken host. I saw old Barix's face
 Pale with the agony of a supreme disgrace,
 Mounting his horse to fly. He trembled, spite the grim

Smile on his lips, at me. I wagged my head at him,
 And wished him a safe journey to Heraclius,
 Advancement and more pay, as one victorious.
 He had just signed with his proud hand the final act,
 Yielding all Egypt up, to the third cataract,
 To 'Amru's camel-riders. Their beasts idly browsed
 Already in his garden, and themselves were housed
 As idly in his palace. I could hear them shout
 Their orders to his slaves ; and they were leading out
 His own white heifer herd for slaughter at his door.
 A regular Belshazzar. Scarce a broken score
 Remained to him in force of his Pretorian guard,
 Stern in their discipline, erect, unbending, hard,
 Imaging Rome's lost headship of the world that was.

Jael. And these, the Saracens ? Is there more certain
 cause

To see them as new friends ? Their faces frighten me,
 Their eyes, their gesturings.

Benjamin. They come with liberty
 And in the name of God, the God that is our own,
 To purge a weary world of Rome's dominion.
 It is the God of Israel smiting with their sword.

Jael. And of their prophet, what ?

Benjamin. Commissioned by the Lord,
 As Amos was commissioned. Think you, my sweet child,
 That prophets are all princes, with hands undefiled
 By the world's common work, and sitting clothed like kings,
 And singing in soft voices news of pleasant things ?
 Not so. The voice of power speaks from the wilderness.
 It chooses untaught men, lone wanderers of the rocks,
 Shepherds with slings and stones, young psalmists from
 their flocks,

And naked insane priests, God's instruments of wrath.
 And so, too, this Mohammed. Math and aftermath
 He has mowed their cities. Princes, kings, and potentates,

The proudest heads of them, like weak inebriates,
Have fallen back staggering, and confess because they
feel

His heavy hand upon them and his pricks of steel,
Their eyes bent to the earth. Priests, who the heresy
Banned yet a moment since, constrained as from on high,
Bear witness to his truth, and with unsandalled feet
And rope-bound heads attest the promised Paraclete,
Mohammed the foretold, last of God's messengers.
There is no God but God.

(*Enter 'AMRU, HÁTIB, and the LORDS OF THE ARABS.*)

Jael. My doubt disappears.

It is His Angel host, so beautiful, so proud,
So noble in its bearing.

Belkis. They have swept the crowd
Of base white faces back. The Nile no more shall see
Those visages of death disgraced with leprosy
Upon its alien shores. Rejoice, O glorious land,
Thy day-dream is fulfilled. Join hand with happy hand,
Ye daughters of despair. Dance, clap your hands and
sing

For your salvation all, ye sons of sorrowing.
Give me the cymbals, Jael. I feel that I must dance
In honour of this day which works deliverance.

Jael. Nay, but the dead.

Belkis. What dead ?

Jael (pointing to Alexis' body). He once was dear to me.

Belkis. No matter, Jael. Our lives we gave. This sets
us free.

We will forget the past.

Jael. You swore not to forget.

Belkis. The old life is no more. The new has paid the
debt.

[*She sings.*]

Song—"IF I FORGET."

If I forget !

O, gladly, from my soul !

I swore once in my rage that I would hate.

But life is sweet, and I have learned to live.

Behold, I cast away these weeds of dole.

I triumph o'er my tears and scorn regret.

Farewell, sad vengeance ! See, my soul aspires

To life and love. I will not die—not yet.

I swear by all the Gods that were my sires

To laugh to-day—for ever to forget !

'*Amru*. The promised hour is these.

Hátib. They are both beautiful,

Fair as the sun, the moon—each one a star, a jewel

Hung in the firmament. It were a glorious fate

To be beloved of them.

'*Amru*. For me it comes too late,

I am already wed—to duty and my sword.

You, *Hátib*, are more free.

Hátib (*aside*). My heart leaps at his word.

(*Enter PATRIARCH and PRIESTS.*)

'*Amru*. But who are these vain men ? Speak, reverend seniors,

What is your will with us ?

Patriarch. To pay you our devoirs

As princes of our land, since God hath given it you

And to our Lord the Caliph. This first, as is due,

—And next to make petition.

'*Amru*. Speak, in the Lord's name.

Patriarch. We crave you an indulgence, and to ease the shame

That rests upon our land through the Nile's waywardness.

The river is in drought and needs a sacrifice.
 This lady is his bride. We ask authority
 To celebrate our rite. The need is she should die,
 According to our law and custom luminous,
 To give the land its rest.

Voices without. We ask it, all of us.

'*Arm.* What is this folly, Hátib ?

Hátib. 'Tis an evil creed

Of the days of ignorance. They deem the Nile has need
 Of a pure virgin life to pacify the drought
 And bring it to full flood. And so the people shout.
 This noble lady here is daughter of their prince,
 A maiden without stain, supreme in innocence
 Of all in Roman lands, and they demand her death
 As bride of their proud river.

'*Amru.* 'Tis a pestilent faith

And lawless superstition we do well to end.

Bring me a pen and paper.

Hátib.

Here.

'*Amru.*

Most reverend

And worthy gentlemen. You ask an impious thing,
 This innocent lady's death. The Lord alone is King
 Of the wide Earth and Sea and all that therein is,
 The lakes and streams and rivers in their fall and rise,
 The plenty and the dearth. It is a crime ye seek.
 Be, rather, merciful, seeing yourselves how weak,
 And leave to God the judgment. Ladies, have no fear.
 We take you in protection. And you, reverend sir,
 Go with this written word and message clear of guile,
 And you shall see a wonder.

(*He writes.*) " To the River Nile,
 " Peace be and salutation. We, in the Caliph's name,
 " Demand your service thus : O river of old fame !
 " If that indeed thou be the servant of the Lord,
 " The Lord God, the Almighty, hearkening to His word,

"Hear and obey this message ; Set thy waters free
 "According to their wont in full fertility
 "Upon this land of Egypt. She is a land of peace
 "With claim to all protections and immunities.
 "So may God succour thee. But if, as these men say,
 "Thou heedest not our counsel, going thy own vain way,
 "Then, go to thy more hurt. The Lord God shall
 provide
 "Or with thee, or without thee." Fling this message
 wide

Into the stagnant flood, and bring me word again.

*[He gives the paper to the PATRIARCH, who
 exit with suite.]*

Benjamin. Most wise of magistrates ! Most glorious of
 men !

We do thee reverence, all.

Belkís (coming forward). A princess kneels to thee.

[BELKÍS and JAEL make show of kneeling.]

'Amru (raising Belkís). Not so. Thy hand I kiss, most
 fair one. Were I free,

I would in my own person do thee right for this
 That I have marred awhile thy bridal happiness
 With our good Father Nile. Forgive it me. Here stands
 A noble officer shall do thee more amends.
 Hátib, your hand for her.

Hátib. Ah, Princess, might I dare

Aspire to your high favour in this world of care,
 How blessed were my lot.

Belkís (pointing to Jael). My lot and hers are one.

We have made oath together not to live alone.

(Aside.) And yet, alas ! I love him.

Jael.

Ah, you love him. Yes.

Let not the thought of mine prevent your happiness.

Belkís. No, no, I will not wed him.

Jael.

Yes. You must, and shall.

Belkís (smiling). We will be old maids together, grave and musical,

But we must not be parted.

Hátib (speaking slowly). Ladies, why dispute ?
Is love so poor a thing, so spiritless to boot,
That it should frightened be to pledge a double troth ?

Belkís. Ah, *Hátib.* By your law ?

Hátib.

Why not ?

Belkís (triumphantly).

He weds us both,

Dear *Jael.*

Jael. Ah, what bliss !

Hátib (giving to each a hand). Ladies, I kneel and pray.

'Amru. This is a happy ending to a happy day.

(*Shouting is heard outside. A crowd rushes in. Enter a MESSENGER with dripping clothes.*)

'Amru. O, wonderful ! My letter !

Messenger (showing his wet clothes). See the answer to it.
The Nile is in full flood.

'Amru.

Thank God.

Benjamin (with fervour).

Oh ! Roma fuit.

CURTAIN.

THE LITTLE LEFT HAND

A MID-VICTORIAN DRAMA

IN THREE ACTS

(Written in 1897)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Sir John Leicester, a Revolutionary Soldier of Fortune.
General Lord Bellingham, in command of the Queen's Troops.
Colonel Warren, serving under him.
Sergeant Mullens, a Non-Commissioned Officer.
Davis and Bradshaw } leaders of the Idealist Movement.
Paul, an Idealist.
Lady Marian (Lady Bellingham).
Rosina, her Maid.
Phoebe, an Idealist.

Town Councillors, Soldiers, Idealists, etc., etc.

PLACE

A Country Town in England.

TIME

Mid-Victorian.

THE LITTLE LEFT HAND

ACT I

SCENE I—*A large Room scantily furnished.*

LEICESTER, DAVIS, BRADSHAW.

Leicester. Is all in readiness? The plan well understood?

The ground marked out and flagged? How many will face blood,

Think you, when the pinch comes? I have seen soldiers fly
From a sudden shower of stones who had scorned cavalry,
Ay, and artillery too, but without special drill

Bolted like boys. 'Twas thus we lost Majuba Hill
In the Boer War. Mind this, strength lies in discipline,

Davis. And a good cause,

Bradshaw. And chief. What fear but we shall win
With you, Sir, for our leader?

Leicester. Truce to compliments.
This is a soldier's battle. Drill and common sense,
And the *mot d'ordre* to act distinctly in their heads,
There lies our generalship.

Davis. Our men will face the reds
If you only wave your hand.

Bradshaw. Your name's a guarantee
With every one of them for certain victory
Wherever freedom's fought for. Pueblo, Puttenden,
Canea, Cansfield, Crete, the Bridge of Sittingen,
These have become their watchwords. They all know your
face,

Although they never saw you till this year of grace.
 The women have your portrait framed in every room
 Clothed in the heroic white renowned through Christendom.
 They know your motto "*Jamais*," and the left-hand glove
 Pinned to your forage cap, and look for it with love ;
 It is your badge of fortune now become their own.
 The children strut like you and imitate your frown.
 Oh ! we are well prepared.

Leicester.

This is all excellent.

But how about your strength ? Have you the complement
 Of small arms for your force ? Eight hundred men, you
 say,

Of the volunteers are yours. How are they armed ?

Davis.

To-day

The force will be complete. We have advice from York
 Announcing their dispatch by the first train.

Leicester.

Close work,

Even if they come to time. And if they are delayed ?

Davis. We have the invoice, Sir.

Leicester.

The invoice, I am afraid,

Will be of little use if the Queen's troops are here.

Bradshaw. They dare not send the troops !

Leicester.

Of that I am less clear.

These are the days of force, and Governments to live
 Must use the powers they wield, even if they next forgive.
 All must have heart to fight if they would hold their own,
 The Priest to hold his creed, the King to hold his throne.
 Strength justifies alike coercion and revolt,
 And Jove would not be Jove but for the thunderbolt.

Davis. We are Idealists and take no count of Kings.

Leicester. Yet a King's constables are facts and stubborn things.

Davis. The constables are ours, all but the Officers.

Leicester. The greater reason then to expect the regulars.
 There should be news in town at the High Council Board.

Go, Gentlemen, I pray, and bring me the last word ;
Tell them my message is to stand fast by the plan
Resolved upon last night, doing the best we can,
Troops or no troops. We meet to-morrow on Pains Hill
The whole strength of the League, calm but inflexible.
At the first stroke of noon we march, each separate band
Led by a Councillor holding the chief command,
The wards have their own drums and flags. A signal gun
Will order the advance and notify the town.
Our first point is the churches. These in your possession,
You have half gained your cause, and half fulfilled your
mission.

A faith proclaimed in church is a faith justified.

(*Aside.*) Just as a woman wronged becomes in church a
bride.

(*Aloud.*) Here is your moral triumph. The material fight
Needs your more active thought, for right still lies with
might.

We need ten thousand men well armed to hold the ground
Against all possible force. See that the men be found.
And come again with news.

Davis.

You shall not wait for us.

Bradshaw. Your fortune leads our own. Both are
victorious.

[*Exeunt DAVIS and BRADSHAW.*]

SCENE II

Leicester (alone). Like all the rest of them, they think a
fight is won

By the noise of shawms and trumpets blown in the new
moon.

Jericho's their precedent. They mock at the old faiths
But still seek miracles at life's hand and death's.

Why have they sent for me ? Because my luck was good,

And they were in straits, poor fools, to save their Brotherhood.

My name alone, they say, is to work prodigies,
A gambler's argument. But is it so unwise ?
No, or I were not here. All faith is a wise thing,
Compared with the lack of it. And therein lies the sting
Of my own unreal life. What a mad lot is mine,
Called to this leadership of a cause half divine,
And pushed to martyrdom by my plain act and deed,
Yet being what I am, a man without a creed,
Almost without a hope of the world's better way,
And mired with a dark past, my sins of yesterday.
Their virtue shames me. Ah ! if they could see in truth
Their trusted leader's heart, his insolence of youth,
His violent manhood—ay, the rebellious instincts still
Ruling his better reason, his enfeebled will
Battling with memories of an unburied past.
If they could learn her name, the dearest loved and last,
Who sent him forth to deeds the nations now applaud
For her sole vanity, with vain love for reward,
They would disown his help, and cast him out from them,
A treachery unmasked, a fraud, a stratagem,
Spite of their need to-day and his help timely given,
These poor Idealists with their unselfish heaven.
And yet their leader loves them. All that is best in me
Thrills at their touch, my pride which is not vanity,
My consciousness of right, my new-born rectitude,
My love of virtuous deeds, their own the ideal good.
No, no, this is not vanity. Say rather a fire
Lit by consuming shame, the unfulfilled desire
Of an heroic youth which would obliterate
The memory of its fall and so be quits with fate.
What else is Man's ambition, even at the best ?
To do some worthiest deed before he takes his rest ?
And who knows rightly what ? We are too ignorant

To do good to the world except by accident.
The sole sure good is to ourselves. And who dares die
Unjustified by deeds while deeds can justify ?
To-morrow will prove all. If we outride the storm,
We found a new religion for the world's reform
And our undying fame. If we are overcome
The world will weep for us achieving martyrdom.
Oh, Marian, Marian ! With that little white left hand
What kingdoms have you rent !

SCENE III

LEICESTER *seated*.

Phoebe (entering). I did not understand
You were alone and busy. Oh, excuse me, Sir.
I see you are in thought.

Leicester. No, dear petitioner,
You do not trouble me. It was but idleness
Made me look sad. It does me good to see your face.

Phoebe. Do you mean it so ?

Leicester. Yes certainly. Sit down awhile,
And tell me all your wish.

Phoebe. I wished to see you smile
Instead of frowning.

Leicester. How ?

Phoebe. You have so stern a look
When speaking to the crowds.

Leicester. This is a bad rebuke
For a popular leader, one who would persuade mankind.

Phoebe. Oh ! Now you laugh at me. This was not in
my mind.

Only I watch you daily when you speak, and then
I wonder at your sadness more than the rest of men.
And often I have wished——

Leicester. For what, you foolish child ?

Phoebe. That I could make you happy. See, now you have smiled.

Leicester. You are very young.

Phoebe. Sixteen.

Leicester. And an Idealist !

Phoebe. Yes.

Leicester. And you speak your thought ?

Phoebe. We all do. It is best.

Leicester. Then tell me the whole truth. I would like to learn your art,

Being myself of those who search the human heart,

And try to make the world, if may be, happier.

How would you cure my grief ?

Phoebe. I would be your follower,
To guard you from all peril. In your hours of pain
I would talk till you forgot. Grief would be silent then,
And I should need no word. You would rest still as
now

And listen to my voice as to a river's flow,

And you would sleep——

Leicester. 'Tis well. And what else ?

Phoebe. I would sit
Your daily worshipper, a Mary at your feet,
Gathering in the pearls of wisdom you let fall
And give them back to you new strung.

Leicester. And is that all ?
It would not be enough. Let me know all your store.

Phoebe. Oh, I would love you too, now and for ever—
more.

Leicester. You are pretty, far too pretty.

Phoebe. What has prettiness
To do with what I ask ?

Leicester (aside). Perhaps more than you guess.

Phoebe. I cannot help it.

Leicester. No. To be pretty is no crime.

You shall have lovers yet, and in a happier time
It is pleasant to be loved.

Phoebe. I would rather die for you
Than be loved by all the world—even if that were true.
(*With emotion.*) That were the ideal ending of the ideal life :
To fall, a flower cut down, and not to feel the knife
Because of the great joy transcending pain. How often
I have thought of this in dreams, till tears have come to
soften

Pain to an ecstasy. Struck thus—by the last dart
Of the last flying foe aimed at the hero's heart,
Leaving the victory his and the world's battle won,
And so faint in his fame as clouds faint in the sun !

Leicester. And if your hero loved you, and you did not die ?

Phoebe. I would then live for him.

Leicester. In what capacity ?

Phoebe. As the companion of his thoughts. All men, they
say,

Need some poor woman's wit to help them on their way.
Mine is intelligent. I have observant eyes.
He would not find me childish if not always wise,
And then——

Leicester. And then what ?

Phoebe. It is pleasant to be loved
(You said it, Sir, just now), and he should find it proved.

Leicester. You are talking nonsense. Love ? What do
you know of it ?

Love is a malady, a grief, a fever fit,
A darkening of the soul, which hides the ideal light.

Phoebe. How then can it be sweet ?

Leicester. Sweet things are seldom right.

Phoebe. And you condemn it ? Love, our missionaries
teach,

Is a sacrament of fire uniting each to each—
We need it for our lives—the initial principle

Which gives the mind its power to work for good and ill ;
 For good if we love right, and our soul meets a soul
 Large in its purposes, and the two make a whole
 Possessed of double strength and wise in loveliness.

Leicester. Under what visible sign ?

Phoebe. The sacramental kiss.

This surely is for good. You do not doubt it ?

Leicester. No.

But if it work for ill ?

Phoebe. That is the tragic woe

Of the world's wickedness, yet unregenerate ;
 The cause of half its pain, the cause of all its hate.
 They would stamp this out in blood ; there is no other hope.

Leicester. And it, too, has a sign ?

Phoebe. That is beyond my scope.

I would not know of it. But love is not to blame

If men do evil things and call it in love's name.

Leicester. Dear child, you are too sweet. (*Aside.*) Alas !
 and innocent. (*Kisses her.*)

Phoebe. What is it ? He has kissed me ! It is the
 sacrament !

SCENE IV

*PAUL entering surprises LEICESTER holding PHOEBE'S
 hand.*

Paul (aside). Phoebe with the chief ! How's this ? She
 has an ecstatic look,

Like the Virgin with the Angel, drawn in a missal book.

I do not like his smile.

(*Aloud.*) Sir John, I come with news
 Most urgent from the Board.

Leicester. Your haste needs no excuse.
 Speak.

Paul. It is ascertained the forces of the crown

Have been reinforced in strength. Two regiments, sent
down

In the night from Liverpool, now hold the central square
In front of St. Jude's Church and the main thoroughfare
From Langley waterworks to the "Cock" at Chesterton.
The side streets are patrolled by the new garrison
Who question all who pass. There are three field-pieces
Posted in Worship Street near the old granaries.
The lower town alone is in the City's hands.
Moreover, a troop of Horse——

Leicester.

It must be Westmoreland's.

Did I not say it? Quick, give me my sword. Stay here,
Paul, till I come again or send a messenger.
This news needs all our thought, perhaps a change of plan.
(*Aside.*) My hour has come at last and I must play the
man.

Phoebe (aside). He is gone, without a look, without a
thought of me.

And Paul, what does he think? Oh, this is misery.
(*Weeps.*)

SCENE V

PAUL *and* PHOEBE *alone.*

Paul. Phoebe, you are in tears. What is the meaning,
say!

This is no hour to cry, be the cause what it may,
To-morrow we may need it. But to-day our grief
Needs other arms than these. Shame on your handker-
chief,
Shame on your foolishness.

This hero, what is he
That you should weep? A God, of poor humanity!
A God? A mountebank! He has a tragic face
And a voice that trembles well, and that is all his case.

What is he to you, Phoebe, but a name in print ?
 Poser and partisan ? I do not trust the mint
 Where he was coined. He was a soldier, too—the name
 Stinks in all honest nostrils. 'Tis a double game
 These soldiers play for honour in their fool's career—
 This side a patriot, that a licensed buccaneer.

Phoebe. Hush, you blaspheme a saint.

Paul. Leicester is virtuous

As a man looks grave in church. Before the world and us
 He stands with a face bowed and his eternal frown.

But who has seen his heart ?

Phoebe. His heart, like his renown,

Is high above our world.

Paul. They tell another tale

Who knew him in his youth. Phoebe, you are looking
 pale.

What is your secret, girl ? This great man's confidence
 Is yours. He held your hand and smiled a minute since.
 What does he say when smiling ?

Phoebe. You are too cruel, Paul,

Unjust, irreverent.

Paul. Love then is lord of all,

As the unconverted teach. And our chief Puritan
 Stands feebly bandying words as between maid and man
 With one a Hedonist. You blush now. Your cheeks speak
 More strongly than your words, showing you more than weak.

Phoebe. It is true I love him.

Paul. What ! Love ! And at such a time,

With the world's fate at issue ! Phoebe, it is a crime !

You have no right to folly ! Look me in the face
 And say this shall not be ! A crime—and a disgrace !

Phoebe. No, neither. You are mad. My love is not like
 this,

A thing to count for shame or count for foolishness.

It is a strength to me, a buttress to our cause,

A glory to my heart, a law transcending laws,
The love that casts out fear.

Paul. But if your leader shrink ?

Phoebe. The shame is yours to doubt. The shame is
yours to think.

Leicester has never failed.

Paul. He never yet has stood

Opposed to what he loves dear as his flesh and blood.

He is a soldier still. His fetish is the rag

Borne by his regiment. The honour of the flag

Excuses all dishonour in a soldier's mind.

He will not strike at it, or strike as one being blind.

Phoebe. You mean he will betray us ? (*Aside.*) This is
jealousy

Because he loves me too.

Paul. To-morrow we shall see.

SCENE VI

(*Re-enter LEICESTER, DAVIS, BRADSHAW, and TOWN
COUNCILLORS.*)

Leicester. We fight then ? That is fixed ? I understand
you right ?

Your minds are all made up ?

Bradshaw. Happen what will, we fight.

Davis. We do not shrink from it.

A Town Councillor. We only asked your thought

To strengthen our decision.

2nd Town Councillor. Your experience bought

Upon so many fields, the instinct of your eye

Used to command the fight and snatch the victory.

Leicester. I thank you, Gentlemen. Keen measures are
my trade.

I am a soldier bred and dare not be afraid,

Even where the odds are great. If all are of your heart
 We need not doubt to play a creditable part
 And pull the matter through. In the game of battle chance
 Has always a last word which means deliverance
 For him who fights the hardest. We shall win the day
 In spite of the Queen's troops, do they the worst they may.
 My mind is clear to risk it.

Phoebe (to Paul). You have heard him, Paul ?

Paul. I hear him and I watch.

Town Councillors. We are determined all.

Leicester. Then each man to his post. (*Aside.*) It is a desperate plan.

But what have I to lose ? Ah ! Marian, Marian !

[*They turn to go out.*]

Enter MESSENGER who stops LEICESTER.

Messenger. A message for the chief.

Leicester. A moment, Sirs—what now ?

Messenger. There is an Officer with a white flag below,
 The bearer of this letter from their General, sent
 To you, Sir John, our chief.

Leicester (looking at the envelope). From the Queen's Government.

It is too late—too late. We cannot look at it.
 And yet this handwriting ! I know it, but forget,
 I cannot put a name. Here ! Stop ! I will speak with him,
 If I do not open it. It all is like a dream
 This monogram and badge, "*Loyauté me oblige.*"
 How strangely things come back.—Sebastopol, the siege,
 The fight at Inkerman, when I a subaltern
 Took glory in it all. What nonsense ! My cheeks burn
 Even at this late day to picture certain scenes,
 And certain words, and men "So proud to be the Queen's
 Servants and Officers !" I dreamed of it last night,
 And thought myself insulted at some trivial slight
 Hurlled at Her Majesty by God knows what mad fool

Whom I must teach his lesson in the fencing school,
And bring to better manners. (*Looking at Paul and Phoebe.*)

That child's eyes on me
Are a reproach, and his, with their sincerity.

(*Enter WARREN.*)

(*Aloud.*) Leave us, good Paul and Phoebe. The Town
Councillors

Should know this new arrival. It may need some course
Of action not discussed. Go, both, and call them back
Once more for one last word.

Phoebe (to Paul). My heart is on the rack
To leave him with this man. I fear some treachery.

Paul. On which side, Phoebe? His?

Phoebe.

Distrustful!

Paul.

We shall see.

[*Exeunt PAUL and PHOEBE.*]

SCENE VII

LEICESTER and WARREN alone.

Leicester. Well, Sir! You would speak to me!

Warren. My orders were, Sir John,
To press you for an answer.

Leicester. Frankly, I have none.
I have not read the letter, nor intend to read.
Things are too far advanced—or not enough—and need
Their settlement elsewhere. When we have paid that score
There may be room perhaps for parleying—not before.

Warren. I understand you, Sir. And yet my duty is
To press you to consider the full penalties,
Not to yourself, Sir John, I do not speak of that,
But to these ignorant fools who run upon their fate
Without a full fore-knowledge. They are at best——

Leicester.

A mob.

Warren. No, but an untried mass—

Leicester. Of heroes on the job,
(We will put it so) poor heroes to their shirt-sleeves stripped
Against scientific strength professionally equipped.

Warren. You do not doubt the issue ?

Leicester. Doubt it ! Pardon me,
I never doubt my star. 'Tis my sole vanity.

Warren. I see I shall not move you. Yet before I go
Forgive me if I speak my pain it should be so
As a man and Officer. (*Aside.*) I must play my strongest
card.

(*Aloud.*) You were, Sir John, I know, like me in the Queen's
Guard

Some years before I joined, in the old fighting days
Of the Crimean War, which our tradition says
Was a battle of the Gods. There is in the Brigade
A record extant still of your great escapade
In which you first won fame. We all are proud of it,
Believe me, to this hour as a regimental feat,
And even, if I may say it without disloyalty,
We are proud of the rest too, the career of victory
In many a strange land which you have made your own,
Abroad, on the Continent. We admire your wide renown.
Only, excuse me, Sir, if I speak plainly, we
Like it less well at home—for the Queen's loyalty
And the old regiment, you understood me, Sir,
And why I brought this letter as interpreter
Of a last hope of peace from——

Leicester. Whose, Sir, is this hand ?

(*Aside.*) His pleading touches me.

Warren. The General's in command.
Who once was your best friend.

Leicester. My friend, Sir ? And his name ?

(*Aside.*) I seem to clutch at shadows.

Warren. General Bellingham.

Leicester (aside). Her husband ! The old man ! Fool,
that I did not guess.

(Aloud.) He was my Colonel once. Your General now ?

Warren. No less.

Leicester (after a pause). Give me the letter back. *(Aside.)*
It half unmans me.

*(Opens it—while he is reading re-enter DAVIS, BRADSHAW,
TOWN COUNCILLORS, PAUL and PHOEBE.)*

(Aloud to Davis.) Read.

You all should know the contents.

Warren. They deserve your heed.

Leicester. What says he, Mr. Davis ?

Davis. 'Tis from the General

To you, Sir, in command of the rebel forces all.

I give its sense in brief. It deprecates the strife

Impending on both sides, the causeless loss of life,

The pain Her Majesty—it says the “ personal pain ”—

Feels at the unhappy issue for misguided men,

Whose cause, but for the force, would merit sympathy.

It promises redress, a parliamentary

Commission on the case, and such remedial acts

As prudence shall desire with due regard to facts.

Paul (aside). Et cetera, et cetera, the usual jargon used
By Governments in straits till they have got you noosed.

Davis. An amnesty to all but common law-breakers.

Paul (aside). Which means a loophole left to hang
malingerers.

Davis. In the meanwhile under truce—

Paul (aside). To gain time.

Davis. —he invites

The chief to a conference.

Leicester. What say you ?

Paul (aside). Ha ! He bites.

We shall see him presently my Lord Chief Advocate

Upon the Government side. All comes to those who wait.

Phoebe (aside). I only fear betrayal. (*Aloud.*) Can we trust them, Sir ?

Bradshaw. If there were treachery meant ?

Leicester. I have no personal fear.

Their General I know.

Paul (aside). Ha !

Leicester. A comrade of old days.

He would not condescend to disingenuous ways.

I should not fear to go. The Government ? Ah, well,

That is another thing as all our histories tell.

And yet the terms seem good.

Town Councillor. We pray you counsel us.

Leicester. I hardly dare advise. It is too onerous.

My friend here, Paul, would say——

Town Councillor. No matter, Sir. The boy

Shall hold his bitter tongue. Speak on without annoy.

Leicester. I will tell you then my thought. The terms proposed seem good,

The best that could be hoped to save your Brotherhood

And, if agreed to, screen the cause from further hurt.

Though Governments are false, they dare not eat the dirt
Of their own written word made false by treachery.

They twist, equivocate, but seldom in terms lie.

Holding this letter, signed by their commissioner,

The General in command, we may treat them without
fear.

A common ruse of war ? A trap to catch me in ?

I cannot see it so. I would trust my head within

The lion's jaws unmoved. I know he would not bite.

All soldiers have one code, one rule of wrong and right,

And treachery could not be under a flag of truce.

The question therefore is : Shall we or not make use

Of the occasion given of peace ? Do you so far trust me

As to send me with full powers and your authority

To do the best I can ? Before I go, be sure
All shall be ready set for fight in half an hour.

Town Councillor. We only fear their wiles—the price
set on your head.

Phoebe (aside). He shall not go alone.

Warren. I stay here in his stead
If you have doubt for him.

Leicester. We have no doubt at all,
Only to be prepared and loyally forestall
All possible accident and casual surprise
From whatsoever cause. (It is best to be forewise.)
This be our plan of action: if at the stroke of noon
I still be unreturned, fire a first signal gun ;
It will warn me to break off a useless argument,
And bring me back to you at speed the way I went.

Town Councillor. And if you should not come ?

Leicester. Give me ten minutes law,
Then forward in full force and give them tooth and claw.
(*With his hand to his sword.*) I will fight my way to you.

Phoebe (aside). He shall not go alone.

Paul. He shall be closely watched.

Town Councillor.

Go, Sir.

Warren (aside).

The game is won.

[*Exeunt.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE I

A Sitting-room at an Inn with a recess partly screened.

LADY MARIAN and her MAID.

Lady Marian. Have the flowers come, Rosina ?

Rosina.

No, Milady.

Lady Marian.

Send

For others then. I see a girl at the street's end
Selling some mignonette. What do you say ? (*Putting
on a bow.*) This bow,
Is it too bright for the rest ?

Rosina.

Indeed, Milady, no.

It lights the dress up well. Milady is too young

For only greys and greens.

Lady Marian.

You have a foolish tongue,

Rosina, I am thirty. And to-day, who knows

What tragedies may be if it should come to blows ?

I am getting old and sad. Rosina, look at this.

Rosina. A first grey hair means luck. It is for happiness.

Lady Marian. And you, Rosina ?

Rosina.

I ? Milady knows me well.

I have no time to be sad.

Lady Marian.

You have your *Cœur fidèle* ?

Is he still nice to you ?

Rosina.

Oh, all that I desire,

Generous, devoted, gay, a temperament of fire,

And then a Sergeant, too! The men of his company
Are all afraid of him—And he is afraid of me.

Lady Marian. You are a fortunate girl. Find me a pair
of gloves

Less soiled than these. (*While Rosina looks in the drawer.*)

Well, well, yours are the best of loves.

Rosina. There are none left.

Lady Marian. What, none?

Rosina. Here is an odd right hand.

Lady Marian (snatching it). Give it.

Rosina. The left is gone.

Lady Marian. No matter. Go now, and
Bring me that flower girl here.

[*Exit ROSINA.*]

SCENE II

LADY MARIAN *alone.*

Lady Marian (looking at the glove). How strange! And
just to-day

Of all the days in the year, the twenty-first of May,

Our anniversary. Strange, wonderfully strange!

And the years which still go on without perceptible change.

[*Goes to a looking-glass and sits before it.*]

What is the use of beauty? Am I a happier woman

Because of this weariful beauty of face? Or is there a human

Being in the world to-day who goes with a lighter heart

Because I am what I am, the type of romantic art?

Rossetti called me so. I see men in the street

Who stop and turn their eyes. I heard one call me sweet

Only the other day. Lord Lightfoot writes me verse,

Just as he always did, no better and no worse.

The press still praises me. The prophets find me wit.

Am I the happier? Does it amuse me? No, not a bit.

I always was Fair Marian, beautiful Marian, names

My father gave me first, who loved to see the flames
Burn in my girlish cheeks—"The Pirate Flag" he said.
It was his dear delight, and fairly turned my head.
But the rest—the rest of them—no. They only weary me.

See,

I would give it all for an hour of folly—if folly could be.
I have been married, how many years? Six? Eight?

No, ten.

Husbands are blind to all, be they the best of men.
What does he know of me? Nothing. What has he seen of
it all?

The ghosts that come in the dark? The tears that in secret
fall?

He is an honest soul, a brave man, all you please,
Only not with the eye that understands and sees.
Wrapped in ambition's fold, his "Duty to his Queen,"
He hardly knows how chaste, how faithful I have been.
Ah! to be pretty and wise! It sounds well. But, in sum,
Years of silent regret for a folly that might have come.
Once in my life, once only, and then for how short a day,
I saw the man I could love. But fate has swept him
away,

Fate and my own sad virtue. He stood like this, my hand
Pressed to his heart, that throbbed in a way I could under-
stand.

He hardly told me he loved me, hardly more than a word,
But my fingers fluttered in his like the wings of a prisoned
bird,

And his eyes looked in my eyes. Such joy was in my heart
I could have danced and sung. But I played my woman's
part

Bravely, and bade him go. I gave him only my glove—
Who would have given how much?—a world of passion
and love—

My glove, the fellow to this. He wears it still, they say,

With our last words for motto: "*Jamais! À jamais!*"
 Leicester, the rebel Leicester, the arch-reprobate,
 The outcast from the world, the man whom all men hate,
 Yet whom all women love. It lies here in its woe,
 The glove that covered the hand he told me he treasured so.
 Ah, this little left hand, a beautiful, wonderful thing,
 With its little useless fingers, its little useless ring!
 How has it played with my life! A hand is a soul. We
 give it

When we are married lightly, and later try to outlive it.
 We face the world with a smile. We spread our sails in the
 sun.

We want it for some one else. It is lost and given and gone.
 The deluge comes apace. The storm howls on the track.
 Vainly the hand goes forth. Time heeds not, nor gives back,
 And the soul is drowned in tears. (*Weeps.*)

(*Drums outside.*) I hate this soldiering life
 With its dull mummeries and make-believe of strife,
 Ending perhaps as now in a real butchery.

[*Goes to the window.*]

How sweet the morning is. It should be hard to die
 On a bright day like this, even here in this black town.
 Yet all are wild for blood.

SCENE III

(*Re-enter ROSINA with PHOEBE disguised as a flower girl.*)

Lady Marian. Where is my lord?

Rosina. Gone down,

Milady, to the Square. He bade me tell you this,
 And not to fear the result. Ah, what a sight it is
 To see them marching past in their new uniforms!

Lady Marian. Nonsense, Rosina, nonsense! When this
 business warms

We shall see them with less paint, not quite such demigods.
But is your Sergeant with them ?

Rosina. Yes. Though what's the odds ?
He will get his clasp and medal—with no risk, they say.

Lady Marian. And that would please you ?

Rosina. Yes. 'Tis as good as another way.

Lady Marian. Well, let us hope the best. (*To Phoebe.*)

Ah, you have brought the flowers !

Are you not frightened, child ?

Phoebe. At what ?

Lady Marian. These troops of ours,
The chance of blood being shed. The streets are full of men.
It is not safe for you.

Phoebe. I have a life to gain (*pointing to the flowers*),
As well as one to lose. (*Aside.*) This is their General's house
And this his wife, whom Paul denounced as scandalous.
Her eyes are kind and good. I will make pretext to stay.
Leicester must soon be here.

Lady Marian. You shall not go away ;
I will buy your mignonette—yes, the whole basketful—
And you can sit with me till things come to a lull.

Phoebe. Lady, you are most good.

[*She sits in a corner.*]

(*Enter GENERAL BELLINGHAM.*)

General Bellingham. My dear, I bring good news
From the rebel camp. Their chief has not dared to refuse
The message that I sent him. It appears that he
Is one well known to us. But (*seeing Phoebe*) you have
company ?

Lady Marian. It is only a poor girl who brought these
flowers.

General Bellingham. Well ! Well !
You shall know all when he comes. A strange tale ! a
strange tale !

But set your mind at ease, my dear. It is to treat

The terms of their surrender. There, down in the street I hear them challenging. I will ask you for this room To hold our conference in. Could you, my love, sit dumb While we debate the terms? Or should we worry you?

Lady Marian. I will sit behind the screen. I have my own work, too.

(To Phoebe.) We will arrange the flowers.

[They sit behind the screen.]

General Bellingham (coming forward). It will be a surprise to her

To see who our guest is—the arch-conspirator!
She used to like him well, if I remember right,
Spite of his mock heroics. Who knows but she might
Be of some use to us if he should prove too keen
In driving a hard bargain? With this sort of men
Women have influence—and Marian is no fool
For all her prettiness. That public ass, John Bull,
Has small mind here for fighting, and Her Majesty
Insists on coming to terms, if terms at all there be.
We must try diplomacy. And yet, by God, I swear
We will hang you yet, Sir John, or I am no Officer.

(Enter an Aide-de-Camp with LEICESTER, PAUL following.)

LEICESTER motions PAUL to stay in the background.

He comes forward. LADY MARIAN and PHOEBE are partly hidden by the screen.)

SCENE IV

LEICESTER and BELLINGHAM in front of the stage. The rest out of hearing. A servant brings in wine.

Leicester. Good morning, Sir.

Bellingham. Good morning. Sit down, General,
I am glad to see you here. Years pass, but after all

They leave us not much older. No, upon my word,
I find you hardly changed.

Leicester.

You sent for me, my lord ?

Bellingham. To talk this business over. We must find
a plan

Less tragical than fighting. Here, as man with man,
It should be an easy thing to come to honest terms.

We are neither of us tyros in the trade of arms,
And can afford to treat without false modesty.

You will have a glass of wine ? What ! No ?

Leicester.

Sir, pardon me,

I do not drink.

Bellingham. At all ! Why, in our fighting days
You were counted a good man in this as in most ways.

Leicester. I find it wiser so.

Bellingham. Nor smoke ? Here is a brand
You with your Eastern ways, no doubt, will understand.

[*LEICESTER refuses.*

By the soul of Wellington, the man is off his head.

He neither smokes nor drinks. It is all true what was said.

[*Pouring out for himself.*

I am younger still than you. I give you, Sir, "The Queen."

Leicester. The Queen with all my heart. (*Aside.*) The
one that might have been—

Bellingham. There, that was better spoken. We shall
find the way

To make a fair deal yet. Forgive me if I say,
Leicester, how strange it seems, you who were one of us
In all your thoughts and feelings, not more scrupulous
Or proud than the rest were, if I remember right,
In taking pleasant things in the most pleasant light,
A good man for all sport with saddle, rod, and gun,
And popular too with the women—when all is said and done,
An Officer of the Guards—that you should choose to spend
Your life in such a way—I speak as an old friend

And husband of my wife, who was your friend once too—
You will not have forgotten Marian?—that just you
Should take so strange a turn, I cannot make it out.
You must despise it all, the lunatics that shout,
The fools that follow you, the seeing your name in print
Always on the noisy side with knaves of every tint
And tinge of rascaldom, in furtherance of a cause
Always against your order and its social laws—
That is the thing astounds me. And then last and worst
This rising here at home. Forgive me the outburst,
But we all feel it. Now you come to me to treat
And say, “The Queen, God bless her.” What is the sense
of it?

I make appeal to you. You know as well as I
The reason why we use our strength unwillingly.
There is no glory here to be gained on either side;
For these Idealists to fight is suicide,
While for ourselves, God knows, we have better work to do
Than firing on a mob, even though led by you.
Will you not help us then? The Queen is all clemency
I give my word for it. Trust her—at least trust me.

Leicester. My lord, I feel your kindness. I have not yet
lost

The sense of early friendships—and of all yours most.
It touches me and moves. Be sure, in what I can,
Within my line of duty as a serious man
Who has a cause to serve which is not quite his own,
I am at one with you. Yes. If I stood alone
I would not care to bargain, here a little more
Or there a little less. I would throw wide the door
And let in all your terms unquestioned as they came,
Content that they were yours and made in a friend’s name.
But I am here an agent, one responsible
To others for his work. I dare not stop to feel,
Or stop to recollect. The Imperial Government

Is not a moral force with honourable intent
 On which a man may lean in perfect confidence.
 All governments have ways of coming to their ends
 Right-minded men would scorn. The terms you sent us
 stood

Fair in their general sense. If you can make them good
 With a more personal pledge on certain points laid down—
 Reform, the amnesty, our friends here in the town
 Who have made cause with us and need immunity
 As well as we ourselves, a pardon plenary
 In the Queen's royal name, as you suggest, and signed
 By you on her behalf and with no second mind—
 I have authority to bring the matter through
 And on our own side sign,—this without more ado,
 Only time presses us. See here—our protocol
 Is easily drawn up. What shall we say? A full
 And unconditional pardon to all those concerned,
 Their friends, and their adherents?

Bellingham. What, the rogues that burned
 The Council Hall at York? No, no, you go too fast.

Leicester. Exactly those that burned it—all, even the last,
 There must be no exception. This is not a case
 Of civil misdemeanour, but of personal grace
 For acts political.

Bellingham. I really must take time
 To think the matter out. Where there was actual crime
 You hardly would expect it.

Leicester. What is crime? The breach
 Of an Act of Parliament, which in our common speech
 We have confused with things theologians once called sin.
 The criminal? Poor wretch, one whom our discipline
 Has happened to immesh by rules of evidence,
 Friends who have sworn against him, or the lack of friends,
 Not any moral guilt. If I conceded this,
 What would you do with it? Array your witnesses,

Mere common men and liars till they take the oath,
When straight their words are gospel and their stammerings
"proof,"

And hang the men you hate. No. What is done is done.
There must be no law, no crime, but plain oblivion.
On this point I am strict. A second is their right
Of corporate recognition. These men, if they fight
Affirm themselves a section in full form and free.
Winning they would shake the base of England's monarchy,
Perhaps all thrones in Europe, for the popular will
Is with them in their task.

Bellingham. Of rolling stones uphill!
This really passes all. The claim is too absurd.

Leicester. We do not claim so much. We put aside the
sword,

And enter on new paths of plain legality,
Converting not coercing. You have proposed it. We
Propose in turn a status, a frank recognition
Of rights political in line with our condition,
In a word we ask a Charter, will you give it us,
My lord? Again time presses.

Bellingham. 'Tis preposterous.

Leicester. And the alternative?

Bellingham. Relief through Parliament.

Leicester (raising his voice). Relief, Sir, through damnation.

Time is idly spent
In riding that old warhorse. Look to its broken knees.

Phoebe (aside). Well spoken, Leicester. Now, who
doubts his sympathies?

Who doubts his loyalty? He is true, and true to me.

Lady Marian (aside). Leicester. It is his voice.

Bellingham. We hardly shall agree,
General, I fear, this way.

Leicester. As you please, my lord. I go.
[*Moves as if to go.*]

Bellingham. I had hoped for better things. Yet, if it must be so,

I suppose it must. This fight, the blood shed here to-day
In the streets of this great city, 'tis you shed it, not they;
The ruin and destruction, war and civil war,
All the long hates engendered there is no reason for,
All this lies on your head. Remember, Sir, on yours—
The responsible cause of evils far beyond our cures.
Yet, Leicester, take my hand. I acknowledge your good
heart.

I would have us part as friends. Ay, and before we part
I would like you to see *her*.

Leicester.

Who? Lady Marian?

Bellingham. Yes, Marian, my wife. She would resent
the plan

Which left her wholly out. She often talks of you,
And always with kind feeling, just as she used to do.

Leicester (who is looking at the clock). I must be back
at noon.

Bellingham. That clock is ten minutes fast,
You have an hour to spare. I will tell her to make haste,
Indeed she is here now.

[*Goes behind the screen and talks aside with MARIAN.*]

SCENE V

Leicester.

To be or not to be?

To see her or not see her? What fatality!

A trouble dogs my steps in all this episode.

I seem to hear a voice pleading 'twixt bad and good,

A voice as of a conscience. But the question lies

Still on which side right is, the unwise and the wise.

The common run of men when they are in doubt say "No."

I always have said "Yes." It has been my rule to go

When others have hung back, to speak where they sat
dumb,
To confront the imprudent thing they called too venture-
some,
And always with success. What is she, Marian,
That I should fear to-day to see her? I a man
Broken to women's wiles? Yet I mistrust me here.
My heart beats at her name.

(BELLINGHAM enters with MARIAN.)

Leicester (withdrawing). My lord, to be sincere——

Marian (aside). He has forgotten me.

Leicester (to BELLINGHAM). I have no time to wait.
No, Lady Bellingham. It is too unfortunate,
To-day of all the days.

Bellingham. She has something she would say
In reference to this business. Be persuaded. Stay,
If only for five minutes.

Paul (pushing forward in Leicester's ear). Pay no heed
to them.

These people are rogues all.

Leicester (impatiently). Sir!

Paul. 'Tis a stratagem.
Their wish is to detain you. Come away from hence.
Beware, Sir, of the woman.

Leicester. Damn his insolence!
This is too much—too much. This youth's ill-tempered
game

Decides me to stay on. My Lady Bellingham,
I am wholly at your orders. (*Aside.*) Fate has said its
word.

Bellingham. I leave you two together. You will want
no third
To talk it out.

Paul. Just so. I said he was a traitor.

He will wait dangling on, her aider and abettor,
Until the hour is past. (*Aloud.*) The Council shall know
this.

Leicester. Go on. I follow you.

Phoebe. I will see what the end is.

[*Exeunt all but LEICESTER and MARIAN. PHOEBE
in the background hidden.*]

SCENE VI

Lady Marian. How strange we should have met. Sit
down and talk to me,
Just for a short five minutes, nicely, quietly,
As in old times. You know what day it is to-day,
Our anniversary?

Leicester. Yes.

Lady Marian. We both have much to say,
And little time to say it. Where shall we begin?
But first of all believe me it was no fault of mine
They claimed me for this talk. Their thought was to deceive,
But I am not with them. I only of course grieve
And want to help and warn you. Must you really go?

Leicester. I am bound and more than bound. What
would you have me do?
You know I do not blame you, not for this at least.

Lady Marian. Men must arrange their lives as they
know and think best,
And I have sympathised as far as a woman dare,
Who has no politics, whose duty lies elsewhere,
In all that you have done. I hate to think you wrong,
You with your great ideas, so generous, so strong.
Oh no! It was not this. And yet I weep to think
How wide we are apart, you standing on the brink
Of what they will call crime, and I in the camp with those

Who every day are counted your more bitter foes,
 Yes, even Bellingham, your friend, as I was too.
 This is my grief.

Leicester. And yet you drove me from you. You !

Lady Marian. No, no. You do me wrong. Unjust !

Unkind ! A man !

You were too quick with me, too eager in your plan.
 You did not give me time to learn your happiness.
 And then too unforgiving. Oh, you did not guess,
 And how was I to tell you ?

Leicester. You loved me then ?

Lady Marian. Who knows ?

If you had had more patience with my woman's woes ?

Leicester. Marian !

[*He takes her hand and sits beside her.*]

Lady Marian. Yes, it is yours. Your little white left hand,
 The one I gave you once. Do you now understand
 How hard it was for me that morning to say no ?
 How bitter when you left me ?

Leicester. Was it really so ?

Were you not callous then, not cruel, not unkind ?

Lady Marian. How could you fancy it ? Oh, truly, men
 are blind.

Unless we write a label to each idle scene,
 They see in our lives nothing—never the might-have-been,
 Never the inner thought in instinct with their own.

Leicester. And is it still mine, this ? (*Kissing her hand.*)

Lady Marian. It has been given to none.

Leicester. Nor lent ?

Lady Marian. Nor lent—it is yours if you like still,
 Only, too late, too late.

Leicester (half aloud). Too late ! Incredible
 That it should come like this—the hour foreseen, fore-
 known,
 The hour of all the hours my fortune counted on—

And only to delude—for lack of what? The leisure
Of a few foolish minutes cheated of their pleasure,
Whereby I lose a world. (*Taking her hand—then after a
pause.*) How beautiful it is

This hand, the holiest of human mysteries,
With its five delicate tips, each one a separate fate
Worth all the world's desire, so frail, so passionate,
So full of sentient life—and for one moment mine
To have and hold, my own, a precious thing, divine
Beyond all human hope. What are the joys men prize?
Ambition, glory, duty? Empty mummeries!
Even in their best ideals! Nothing to this sweet hand
That soul or reasoning sense should care to understand,
(*Kissing her hand.*)

Nothing, nothing, nothing!

Lady Marian.

You have my glove still?

Leicester.

See,

Here in my hat it flies, my flag of victory,
And never yet defeated. 'Tis an amulet,
The superstitious say, preserving from defeat,
As long as she who gave it shall remain unkind.

Lady Marian. To-day it has lost virtue. She has changed
her mind.

It only can undo you.

[*She takes it from his hat and puts it in her
bosom.*

Phoebe.

He has given it her!

Ah, God! He has betrayed.

[*She covers her face with her hands—then rises
hurriedly and goes out.*

Leicester (rising).

I heard a sound in there

As of one weeping. No?

Lady Marian (calling). Rosina! There is none.

The room is empty.

Leicester.

Sweet, time is I should be gone.

Bid me to say good-bye. I have no strength to go.

[*Embracing her.*]

Henceforth we are each other's for all weal and woe,
Throughout time and eternity. You swear it? On the
faith

Of all that we have suffered? In this life and death,
And till the day of Judgment to be leal and true,
And live for our sole love?

Lady Marian.

I swear it.

Leicester.

Sweet, adieu.

This fight shall be my last. If I prove victor, well
My fame shall be my dowry—large and laudable
In the face of all the world. The world forgives success,
It will forgive our love its sin of happiness.
Defeated we elude them.

Lady Marian.

The Queen's clemency

Is not invoked in vain where men fail honourably.

Leicester. Or fall? No matter, love. The battle lost
or won

Seals our great victory. (*A cannon shot is heard.*) Great
God! the signal gun.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE I

Interior of a Church—DAVIS, BRADSHAW, and others.

Davis. The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon!

It was good

To see the red-coats run before our multitude.

We broke them by sheer numbers——

Bradshaw.

Say the Almighty's power.

Davis. Yes, and our bodily weight, in less than half an hour.

Oh! if the people knew the brute strength of their hands,
There would be no more kings propped up by tolerance,
No more of these mad soldiers. All night long they sat
Taking God's name in vain, a devil's syndicate,
Roaring and ranting out their music-hall lewd songs
In stark profanity. I heard them—their rank tongues
Hissing with imprecations, foul, libidinous,
Till the night stank.

Bradshaw. God's hand has been stretched out to us
Because we prayed.

Davis. 'Twas great. And Leicester at the nick
Appearing on their flank. The chief was choleric
To-day to a good purpose, and his rage struck home.
He came on like a madman.

Bradshaw.

He was late to come——

Davis. But not too late. They say he escaped by miracle

From the arrest they planned him. The Queen's General
Had set his wife to trap him, but he knew their ways
And broke out of their hands in the fair lady's face.
And once on horseback! Ha! They dared not bar his
road,

The chief is a great soldier.

Bradshaw.

And a man of good?

Hum. There are some distrust him. His past life——

Davis.

Is past.

To-day he is one with us; his lot with ours is cast,
A rebel and a martyr—what would you have more?
He has unsheathed his sword against the sovereign power,
He cannot now go back.

Bradshaw.

In things political,

Perhaps. But of the spirit? Deeds are of light avail
When the man's wanton heart lives unregenerate.

Davis. We need him for a leader. Our cause trembles
yet.

Bradshaw. In the Almighty's balance, not in Man's. (Ho,
there!

You with the blunderbuss, keep the door fast.) 'Tis prayer
Not prowess wins the day, virtue not violence,
Or how should we have prospered?

Davis.

God needs means for ends.

Leicester's his instrument. But hark—the shouts—the
drums,

It sounds like victory. See—the conquering hero comes.

SCENE II

Doors are thrown open. Enter LEICESTER and others.

PAUL and PHOEBE in the background.

Davis. Is it over?

Leicester. For the moment they are driven back

According to the tactics all young armies lack,
Having got them on the run we should have kept them
there,

But without guns or cavalry we had no luck to spare,
And so may shout a bit though not clear of the wood.

Bradshaw. Thank God for a great victory.

Leicester. Ay, indeed, thank God.

(Aside.) It was a narrow shave, none more surprised
than I

To see them turn their backs.

Bradshaw. The cause and liberty ! *(They cheer.)*

Davis. You are a great man, Leicester.

Leicester. Nonsense. It was luck.

War is but pitch and toss. I came in with the ruck,
Just as the battle turned and gave it a last shove.

Paul (advancing). With whose hand ? Yours ? Or
whose ? The little left-hand glove,

Your badge of victory, was in the front to-day,
With a new miracle.

Leicester. Sir !

Paul. So the vulgar say.

I did not myself see the angel with the sword,
The angel with the glove, commissioned of the Lord,
Yet all vow the glove did it. One more victory !
For the little white left hand ! Shout, comrades, lustily
The little left-hand glove !

All. The Glove !

Paul. Ay, shout again,

The noise will do you good. *(Aside.)* Such happy fools
are men.

Look at it ! *(Points at LEICESTER'S cap.)*

Bradshaw. Where ?

Davis. 'Tis gone.

Bradshaw. The glove is lost.

Paul. Or strayed.

It has wandered gaily back to its fellow glove, mislaid.

Leicester. It is true the badge is gone. I dropped it in the press.

(*To PAUL.*) Why, Sir, this insolence? Luck holds us none the less.

It shall forgive this loss, this lapse,——

Paul. With other sins.

Bradshaw. What does he mean?

Paul. You laugh.

Leicester. Sir, let him laugh who wins.

This boy is beyond bearing. To your sense as men

I turn me from this fooling.

Bradshaw. What is it, Paul?

Paul. Hear then,

Our leader talks of fooling. Which is the fool, think you,

The man that does and dares, that fights at the time due,

Or he that plays with harlots, till the hour is past?

Ay, or is played with by them, comes in at the last,

Just as the act is over and the stage scene drops,

To gather in the pence and share the lollipops?

The chief is a great soldier, but the game of war

Is not the only trick of his soul's repertoire.

Alas for the poor ladies—when he mows them down!

A wonderful fighting man! Heaven help the overthrown.

Leicester (advancing). Now by the Lord Almighty!

[*Menaces PAUL.*]

Davis (intervening). Paul, have done with this.

Time is and place for all things.

Paul. Ay, a time to kiss!

A time to toy and trifle! To make amorous strife

At a fair lady's knees, and she a neighbour's wife!

Oh glorious ideal for the Idealists!

Davis. Enough, good Paul. To-morrow——

[*Others intervene. They struggle with PAUL.*]

Paul. Let them go, my wrists.

[Turning on LEICESTER.

I charge him with the obscene !

[They drag him away.

Bradshaw.

The obscene ?

Paul (as they thrust him out).

Adultery !

Leicester (aside). The boy knows nothing. Marian ?

No, it cannot be.

He fires at a mere venture. (*Aloud.*) Gentlemen, I pray,
Relieve me of this trifling—for at least to-day.

I know of no such failure. 'Tis an ugly word.

I know of no such mistress, none, Sir, but my sword.

(*Aside.*) Marian must be protected. (*Aloud.*) In my
earlier time,

Who knows, I may have fooled it. Love was not a crime

In the company I kept. But here, among you all,

No, Sirs, upon my life, we keep no festival,

We none have time for folly. Comrades, once again,

Remember we are fighting. Let us act as men,

Not boys, till it is over. When we have grasped our fate

Then we may hound each other with our love and hate

To our best heart's content, but not this battle day.

Back, all men to the field !

All.

Hurray ! the chief ! hurray !

[They hurry out.

SCENE III

PHOEBE is left alone—she walks up and down for some
instants in silence. Then passionately.

Phoebe. It moves me still to hear him. Was it a dream

I saw,

A dream, or an enchantment, a mysterious flaw

In my eyes' judgment ? What ? Paul, who saw nothing,
swears

All that I saw and more. Her lover, he declares,

She his once paramour, his fast confederate still.
What is the truth ? Ah, God ! We see but what we will.
We think but what we choose. We have no certain guide
But our own heart's desire at death-grips with our pride.
Paul always hated him. I loved him as a flower
Loves the white sunlight, ay as a wave of the sea the power
Of the storm shaking it, as a child's voice loves the sound
Of its own echo shouted from the hills around,—
As something loftier, mightier than itself, divine
And far beyond these arms to reach to or entwine,
Far, far beyond these tears. And yet I saw him, how ?
He held her in his arms. Their lips touched—yes—I vow
He kissed her on her lips—a woman not his own,
One plighted to another—and she did not frown,
Nor chide, nor strike. She was pleased—ay, pleased—she
smiled at him,

And he at her. I have seen a soul lost, one of the Seraphim
Cast out into the darkness, a crime done to law,
A sacrament profaned ! All this with my eyes I saw.
And yet, yet. Paul denounced him, he did well, but I,
I could not move my lips. I felt it treachery.
He would have scorned me had I spoken—he would have
said

It was a girl's foolish jealousy had turned my head.
What to him are our laws, our thoughts, our consciences ?
Even now I dare not grieve him or take part with these.
I could not be a witness. Yet the faith ? the cause ?
I am in doubt of all things, of all faiths, all laws,
All duties, even of pain. I know not how to act,
Seeing the world thus shortened of the love it lacked,
Of virtue, truth, obedience. I must await some sign.
A flash of light may come, a wisdom more than mine.
God may inspire my hand if he leaves blind my heart.

*[A sound of cannon is heard and of fighting
approaching nearer.]*

Phoebe (looking out into the street). They are fighting by the Court House and the Cattle Mart.

The dragoons have turned on them. They are charging up the street.

They are riding down our people, every one they meet, Men, women, children, all. There must be many dead.

The crowd waves like a field cut down and harvested.

Ah God! If we should fail—if we indeed should fail!

If this should end it all! Our faith of no avail!

Our life's design a dream! And we deserve it. See

What sins we have sinned through weakness, through inconstancy.

Complicity in wrong! And he, where is he? There!

That was a cannon shot. The shell burst in the air

Above their heads. They fly from it! Our people fly!

What am I doing here? They are on us! Let me die!

Oh, let me die with them!

[She rushes to the door, but it is burst open in her face, and a crowd of fugitives pours in, with whom DAVIS and BRADSHAW. PHOEBE is thrust aside and sinks on the ground by the door, where she remains crouched.]

SCENE IV

Bradshaw.

All's lost. All's lost.

Davis.

How? What?

Is it true we are betrayed? I warned you of the plot.

The chief is where?

Bradshaw.

He's taken. It was an ambuscade

The reds had laid for him in the new esplanade.

They made a feint of flying, and he followed on

And fell into their trap——

Davis.

Like any tailor's son.

I told you he was a traitor. We have been bought and sold.
Paul said it. Where is Paul?

Bradshaw. Where we shall be—enrolled
In Heaven among the saints. His last word as he fell
Was “Fight on for the Ideal, and the reds to Hell!”
He had his eye on Leicester. He was close behind him,
And when the chief surrendered. Bah! It seemed to
blind him.

The blood rushed to his eyes. They shouted, “Hands up,
boy,”

But he only laughed at them with a new furious joy
And ran upon their swords. And so they ran him through.

Davis. The boy was a good hater.

A voice. And a comrade true.
If all had been like him!

Bradshaw. A curse is on our state
Because we gave our trust to one a reprobate,
In whom we all have sinned.

A voice. Let us repent and pray!

*[They put themselves in an attitude of prayer,
the doors are again thrown open and enter
SERGEANT MULLENS and CORPORAL
CARVER with a detachment of soldiers, and
LEICESTER as their prisoner.]*

SCENE V

Mullens. Surrender, every man! Here, Corporal, clear
the way,

Take all the rogues in charge; this is the rebel lot
And these the ringleaders, and give them something hot.
They want a bit of schooling. Use the butt, men. There!
You have left them sensible with half their wits to spare.

*[The soldiers club their muskets and cudgel
the crowd.]*

It is a good rule always in affairs like these
 To give a drubbing first. Then you may stand at ease
 And wait for the Court's verdict with a tranquil mind.
 The prisoner goes acquitted, but he's sore behind.
 Round them up, Carver, so, under the pulpit screen.

Carver (putting a guard over them). Lie still, ye happy
 scoundrels, prisoners of the Queen!

We'll teach ye to rebel.

Mullens. That is enough. They'll sit
 As quiet now as mice, while we take stock a bit.
 (To LEICESTER *deferentially*). You, General, take a seat
 kindly in this front pew;

It will save me setting a guard to have you here in view,
 And you are not like these. You will excuse my tongue
 For its rough edge. (To *his men*.) Come, boys—I'm
 thirsty as a bung.

It's been a thirsty morning, thirsty work all round,
 Who'll show us to a drink? You, prisoners, I'll be bound,
 Know where the public's are. If there's a house near by,
 In God's name, name it us.

Bradshaw. Silence. Make no reply.

Davis. They have got us by the neck—it's time to
 temporise.

Mullens. What? None of you know nothing?

One of the Prisoners. There's the "Compasses"
 At the next corner, Sir, and the "Imperial Crown,"
 And the old "Fighting Cocks," the best name in the town,
 They're all within a stone's throw.

Another Prisoner. Give us leave a minute.
 We'll show you the way gaily.

Mullens. There's no money in it,
 You understand, young man. We're on the loot this
 turn.

Prisoner. Money or not, they'll serve you.

Mullens. That they'll have to learn.

(*To the soldiers.*) Come, Joyce and Parsons, you run out
with this good chap
And bring a can back handy from the nearest tap.
I've got a thirst that kills me.

Leicester. You're a cheerful fellow,
And should receive promotion. Here's a bit of yellow
To make the matter sure. I'll stand you all your stuff.

Mullens. General, we thank you kindly.

(*To JOYCE and PRISONER.*) Off! and bring enough.

(*To LEICESTER.*) I like these ways in war, "My friend the
enemy,"

That's a good motto, Sir, or where would soldiers be?
You were out of luck to-day. But you are a hero, Sir,
You must serve the Queen again, and cut the bushranger.

Leicester (aside). The fellow strikes me hard, but I must
humour him.

(*Aloud.*) I seem to know you, Sergeant, though my
memory's dim,

We've served together somewhere. Where was it? Your
face

Is quite familiar to me.

Mullens. Sir John Leicester. Yes,

You honour me by naming and remembering it.

If I might make so bold, and it was not indiscreet,

I should say we have been comrades, served under the same
flag.

Leicester. Which?

Mullens. Sir, the noblest known, though it's
not for me to brag,

We have fought in company, and won together, won
In the only cause worth winning. Yes, indeed, Sir John,
I am proud to think of it. Love is a leveller.

Leicester. You mystify me fairly.

Mullens. How shall I tell you, Sir?

You have heard the name Rosina?

Leicester (aside). What does the coxcomb mean ?
(Aloud.) Rosina ?

Mullens. Yes, Rosina. Her Majesty the Queen
 Has her fair maids-in-waiting, and all ladies have.
 Service is no reproach. You, General, are brave,
 And ladies love the brave, and maids are as they are,
 And women are—just women. So they are young and fair
 And not too whimsical, they make our happiness.
 Oh, we have served together——

Leicester. God ! Has it come to this ?
 Rosina ! Marian's maid ! It would be too laughable
 In any strait less dire. The insolent dog ! *(Aloud.)* Well,
 well !

You shall drink the lady's health.

(Re-enter JOYCE and the rest with a quarter cask.)

Mullens. Here comes the liquor, boys.
 Three cheers for Sir John Leicester. Shout ! Don't spare
 the noise !

(They pour out and drink. Enter MARIAN and ROSINA.)
 And three cheers for the ladies. *[They shout.]*

SCENE VI

Lady Marian (aside to Leicester). Thank God, you are
 here.

Rosina. And Sergeant Mullens too—as senior Officer.

Lady Marian (advancing to MULLENS). You are in charge
 here, Sergeant ? This is a happy chance.

Mullens. My lady—and Rosina ! *(Saluting.)* Ladies, at
 your commands.

(To MARIAN.) My Lady Bellingham, your servant.

Lady Marian. We have come
 Straight from Headquarters, Sergeant. General Bellingham
 Has sent us with a message. All the fighting line

Is ordered to fall back, whether outside or in
 The precincts of the town, and they are stopping fire
 Already in the streets—this by the Queen's desire,
 Resistance being at an end. My special message was,
 To the first Officer I should chance to come across,
 To order in all prisoners taken instantly
 To the General at Headquarters. He desires to see
 The rebel chief at once. You have with you a few
 It seems of the most important. I make my bow to you,
 Sergeant, on your good luck. I will see to it you get
 Your brevet for this capture. Who knows?—an epaulet,
 Or even the V.C.

Mullens. My Lady. I am yours,
 Entirely to command.

Lady Marian. One of your prisoners
 I would have a word with, Sergeant, while you rank the
 rest.

I will take a seat here. See—Rosina is distressed
 That you have not noticed her. Five minutes and we
 start.

Rosina, go with him. The girl has got a heart,
 Sergeant, and loves you. There—she was frightened in
 the street

And wants some comforting. Be her good paraclete,
 Give her a kind word. Say you love her—she will believe
 it—

Then make your men fall in. I won't forget the brevet.

SCENE VII

MULLENS crosses the stage with ROSINA, who drinks a glass
 with him, and they talk together while the soldiers leisurely
 put the prisoners in line, MARIAN sits down by LEICESTER.

Lady Marian. I have come to save your life—thank God,
 you are alive—

And take you from their hands. Be prudent, and forgive,
 If I have dared too much. A price is on your head,
 Yours only, all the others being amnestied
 By the Queen's clemency. My husband means you harm.
 You must not come before him while his blood is warm
 And you his prisoner. Listen—I have a plan,
 Set with my maid Rosina, whose lover is this man
 The sergeant of your guard. She will have him occupied
 When the moment comes for action. Keep close to my
 side

As we march out with them, and when we reach the street
 Mount in my carriage with me, quick. We must brazen it
 As part of my lord's orders they must all obey.

They will not dare to stop us. Once we are clear away,
 The game is in our hands. My name will pass us through.

Leicester (hesitating). You are an angel, Marian, what
 can I say to you ?

How thank you ? How make clear ?

Lady Marian.

You seem to hesitate.

Look at those men (*pointing to the soldiers drinking*).

What hinders ?

Leicester.

Nothing, but my fate.

I shall die happy, Marian, but I cannot fly.

My hour of fate has sounded.

Lady Marian.

Die ? You shall not die,

You shall live to make me happy.

Leicester. My duty lies with these (*pointing to the prisoners*).

Lady Marian. And mine with Bellingham, O man of
 subtleties !

Yet I am here for what ? To save you from his hands.
 These foolish souls are safe. Their manifest madness stands
 Between them and the law which asks no punishment
 More than their folly finds them. The Queen's grace was
 sent

An hour ago to all. And you ? You would die forlorn,

[She gives him her left hand which he lays upon his heart. He holds back, but she draws him towards her kissing his hands, and he gradually yields.]

Leicester.

This is reality.

Lead on.

[She leads him towards the door, and the soldiers form up behind them with the prisoners; but as they reach it PHOEBE rises and intercepts them. A pistol shot is heard, and LEICESTER falls as the curtain drops.]

CURTAIN.

THE WISDOM OF MERLYN

THE WISDOM OF MERLYN

THESE are the time-words of Merlyn, the voice of his age
recorded,

All his wisdom of life, the fruit of tears in his youth, of
joy in his manhood hoarded,
All the wit of his years unsealed, to the witless alms awarded.

* * *

These are his time-gifts of song, his help to the heavy-laden,
Words of an expert of life, who has gathered its sins in
his sack, its virtues to grieve and gladden,
Speaking aloud as one who is strong to the heart of man,
wife and maiden.

* * *

For he is Merlyn of old, the once young, the still robed in
glory,

Ancient of days though he be, with wisdom only for wealth
and the crown of his locks grown hoary,
Yet with the rage of his soul untamed, the skill of his lips
in story.

* * *

He dares not unhoucelled die, who has seen, who has known,
who has tasted

What of the splendours of Time, of the wise wild joys of
the Earth, of the newness of pleasures quested,

All that is neither of then nor now, Truth's naked self
clean-breasted,

Things of youth and of strength, the Earth with its infinite
pity,
Glories of mountain and plain, of streams that wind
from the hills to the insolent human city,
Dark with its traders of human woe enthroned in the seats
of the mighty.

* * *

Fair things nobler than Man before the day of his ruling,
Free in their ancient peace, ere he came to change, to
destroy, to hinder with his schooling,
Asking naught that was his to give save freedom from his
fooling.

* * *

Beautiful, wonderful, wise, a consonant law-ruled heaven,
Garden ungardened yet, in need yet hardly of God to
walk there noon or even,
Beast and bird and flower in its place, Earth's wonders more
than seven.

* * *

Of these he would speak and confess, to the young who
regard not their heirship,
Of beauty to boys who are blind, of might to the impotent
strong, to the women who crowd Time's fair ship,
Of pearls deep hid in Love's Indian seas, the name of the
God they worship.

* * *

Thus let it be with Merlyn before his daylight is ended,
One last psalm of his life, the light of it lipped with
laughter, the might of it mixed and blended
Still with the subtle sweet need of tears than Pleasure's self
more splendid,

Psalm and hymn of the Earth expounding what Time teaches,
 Creed no longer of wrath, of silent issueless hopes, of a
 thing which beyond Man's reach is,
 Hope deferred till the heart grows sick, while the preacher
 vainly preaches.

* * *

Nay but a logic of life, which needeth no deferring,
 Life with its birthright love, the sun the wind and the
 rain in multiple pleasure stirring
 Under the summer leaves at noon, with no sad doubt of erring,

* * *

No sad legend of sin, since his an innocent Eden
 Is, and a garden of grace, its gateway clear of the sword,
 its alleys not angel-ridden,
 Its tree of life at the lips of all and never a fruit forbidden.

* * *

Merlyn is no vain singer to vex men's ears in the street,
 Nay, nor a maid's unbidden. He importuneth none with
 his song, be it never so wild and sweet.
 She that hath ears to hear, let her hear; he will not follow
 her feet.

* * *

Merlyn makes no petition. He asketh of no man alms.
 Prince and prophet is he, a monarch, a giver of gifts, a
 lord of the open palms,
 Sueth he naught, not at God's own hand, though he laudeth
 the Lord in psalms.

* * *

Merlyn would speak his message only to hearts that are
 strong,
 To him that hath courage to climb, who would gather
 time's samphire flowers, who would venture the crags
 among.
 To her who would lesson her soul to fear, with love for
 sermon and song.

Merlyn hath arms of pity, the weak he would hold to his
soul,

Make them partakers of truth, of the ancient weal of the
Earth, of the life-throb from Pole to Pole.

He would hold them close ; he would dry their tears ; with
a kiss he would make them whole.

* * *

Thus would he sing and to thee, thou child with the eyes of
passion

Watching his face in the dark, in the silent light of the
stars, while he in his godlike fashion

Maketh his mock at the fears of men, nor spareth to lay the
lash on.

* * *

Thus would thy Merlyn devise, ere the days of his years be
numbered,

Now at threescore and ten. He would leave his word to
the world, his soul of its load uncumbered.

Then would he lay his ear to the grave, and sleep as his
childhood slumbered.

* * *

What is the fruit of Wisdom ? To learn the proportion of
things ;

To know the ant from the lion, the whale from the crest
of the wave, the ditty the grasshopper sings

From the chaunt of the full-fledged Paradise bird as he
shakes the dew from his wings.

* * *

There is one thing more than knowledge, a harvest garnered
by few :

To tutor the heart to achieve, to fashion the act to the
hand, to do and not yearn to do,

To say to the wish of the soul " I will," to have gathered
the flower where it grew.

I was young, and they told me "Tarry. The rash in the nets are taken.

If there be doubt of thy deed, abstain, lest the day of danger behold thee by these forsaken,
Lest thou lie in the lion's den thou hast roused, with the eyes thou hast dared to waken."

* * *

They spake, but I answered "Nay, who waiteth shall take no quarry.

Pleasure is fleet as the roe; in the vales he feedeth to-day, but at night when the eyes grow weary
Lo, he hath passed to the desolate hills; he is gone. Nay, *he* may not tarry."

* * *

For Joy too needeth a net. He cometh tame to thy hand,
Asketh an alms of thy life, to serve thee, thy jubilant slave, if thou wouldst but understand.
Then is thy moment, O Man, for the noose, be it steel or a silken band.

* * *

Therefore, where doubt is, do! Thou shalt stumble in thine endeavour,

Ay, till thy knees be sore, thy back with the arrows of grief, and thou stand with an empty quiver.
Yet shall thy heart prevail through its pain, for pain is a mastering lever.

* * *

Wouldst thou be wise, O Man? At the knees of a woman begin.

Her eyes shall teach thee thy road, the worth of the thing called pleasure, the joy of the thing called sin.
Else shalt thou go to thy grave in pain for the folly that might have been.

For know, the knowledge of women the beginning of wisdom is.

Who had seven hundred wives and concubines hundreds three, as we read in the book of bliss ?

Solomon, wisest of men and kings, and "all of them princesses."

* * *

Yet, be thou stronger than they. To be ruled of a woman is ill.

Life hath an hundred ways, beside the way of her arms, to give thee of joy thy fill.

Only is love of thy life the flower. Be thine the ultimate will.

* * *

A right way is to be happy, a wrong way too. Then beware.

Leave the colt in his stall, he shall grow to a thankless jade, be he never so fat and fair.

Sloth is a crime. Rise up, young fool, and grasp thy joy by the hair.

* * *

What is the motto of youth ? There is only one. Be thou strong.

Do thy work and achieve, with thy brain, with thy hands, with thy heart, the deeds which to strength belong.

Strike each day thy blow for the right, or failing strike for the wrong.

* * *

He that would gain let him give. The shut hand hardly shall win.

Open thy palms to the poor, O thou of the indigent heart. There shall pleasure be poured therein.

Use thy soul to the cord of joy. If thou sin must, strongly sin.

Cast thy whole heart away. The Earth, philosophers tell,
Leaps to a pebble thrown, be it never so little ; it moved
to the bidding of that which fell.
Throw thy heart ! Thou shalt move the world, though
thou fall on the floor of Hell.

* * *

Few have the courage of loving. Faint hearts ! The loss
is theirs.

Few of their idlest whims. " I would win to Rome ere
I die," one cried in his daily cares,
Yet plods on on 'Change to his grave, the slave of his stocks
and shares.

* * *

Learn to appraise thy desires, to weigh the wares of thy
heart.

If thou wouldst play with pleasure, avoid Love's passion-
ate tides, its perilous Ocean chart,
Hug the shores of Love's inland seas, and buy thy joys in
the mart.

* * *

Love lightly, but marry at leisure. Wild Love is a flower
of the field

Waiting all hands to gather and ours. If we leave it
another will win it and kneel where we kneeled.
Marriage is one tame garden rose in a garden fenced and
sealed.

* * *

O thou who art sitting silent ! Youth, with the eyelids of
grief !

How shall I rouse thee to wit ? Thou hast stolen the
joy of our world. Thou scornest its vain relief.
Nay, she is here. Be thy tongue set free. Play up, thou
eloquent thief.

Doubt not thy absolution, sinner, who darest to sin.

So thou prevail in the end, she shall hold thee guiltless of
guile, a hero, a paladin.

The end in her eyes hath thee justified, whatever thy
means have been.

*

*

*

Love is of body and body, the physical passion of joy ;

The desire of the man for the maid, her nakedness
strained to his own ; the mother's who suckles her boy

With the passionate flow of her naked breast. All else is
a fraudulent toy.

*

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*

Of the house where Love is the master thy beauty may
hold the key.

It shall open the hall-door wide, shout loud thy name to
its lord. Yet, wouldst thou its full guest be,

Bring with thee other than beauty, wit. Then sit at the
feast made free.

*

*

*

"To talk of love is to make love." Truly, a maxim of price.

Nathless the noblest soul, shouldst thou tell her of
passionate things and fail to gaze in her eyes,

Shall hold thee cheap in her woman's pride, a clown for
thy courtesies.

*

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*

Love hath two mountain summits, the first where pleasure
was born

Faint in the cloud-land of light, a vision of possible hope ;
the second a tempest-torn

Crag where passion is lord and king. Betwixt them what
vales forlorn !

Happiness needs to be learned. In youth the ideal woman
Gazed at afar was a dream, a priceless untouchable prize,
while she in your arms, too human,
Mocked you with love. 'Tis an art learned late ; alas, and
the whole by no man.

* * *

O ! thou in the purple gendered. Thou needst pain for
thy case.

Lose thy health or thy heart. Be bowed in thy soul's
despond. Be whelmed in a world's disgrace.
So shall thy eyes be unsealed of pride and see Love face to
face.

* * *

If thou wouldst win love, speak. She shall read the truth
on thy lips.

Spoken vows shall prevail, the spell of thy eloquent hand,
the flame of thy finger-tips.
Write ? She is reading another's eyes while thy sad pen
dips and dips.

* * *

Thou hast ventured a letter of passion, in ease of thy
passionate heart ?

Nay, be advised ; there is fear, mischance in the written
word, when lovers are far apart.
Pain is betrayed by the subtle pen where lips prevailed
without art.

* * *

Love is a fire. In the lighting, it raiseth a treacherous
smoke,

Telling its tale to the world ; but anon, growing clear in
its flame, may be hid by an old wife's cloak,
And the world learn nothing more and forget the know-
ledge its smouldering woke.

Comes there a trouble upon thee ? Be silent, nor own the debt.

Friendship kicks at the goad ; thy naked state is its shame ; thou hast angered these with thy fret.

Wait. The world shall forgive thy sin. It asks but leave to forget.

*

*

*

The world is an indolent house-shrew. It scolds but cares not to know

Whether in fancy or fact. What it thinks we have done, that it scourges ; the true thing we did it lets go.

What matter ? We fare less ill than our act, ay, all of us ; more be our woe !

*

*

*

There are days when wisdom is witless, when folly is noble, sublime.

Let us thank the dear gods for our madness, the rush of the blood in our veins, the exuberant pulsings of Time, And pray, while we sin the forbidden sin, we be spared our penance of crime.

*

*

*

There are habits and customs of passion. Long loves are a tyrannous debt.

But to some there is custom of change, the desire of the untrodden ways, with sunshine of days that were wet, Of the four fair wives of love's kindly law by licence of Mahomet.

*

*

*

Experience all is of use, save one, to have angered a friend.

Break thy heart for a maid ; another shall love thee anon. The gold shall return thou didst spend, Ay, and thy beaten back grow whole. But friendship's grave is the end.

Why do I love thee, brother ? We have shared what things
in our youth,
Battle and siege and triumph, together, always together,
in wanderings North and South.
But one thing shared binds nearer than all, the kisses of one
sweet mouth.

* * *

He that hath loved the mother shall love the daughter no
less,
Sister the younger sister. There are tones how sweet to
his ear, gestures that plead and press,
Echoes fraught with remembered things that cry in the
silences.

* * *

Fly from thy friend in his fortune, his first days of wealth,
of fame ;
Or, if thou needest to meet him, do thou as the children of
Noah, walk backwards and guard thee from blame.
He who saw found forgiveness none. With thee it were
haply the same.

* * *

Bridegroom, thy pride is unseemly. Thou boastest abroad,
with a smile,
Thou hast read our humanity's riddle. Nay, wait yet a
year with thy bride ; she shall lesson thee wiser the
while.
Then shalt thou blush for thy words to-day, the shame of
thy innocent guile.

* * *

The love of a girl is a taper lit on a windy night.
Awhile it lightens our darkness, consoles with its pure
sudden flame, and the shadows around it grow white.
Anon with a rain-gust of tears it is gone, and we blink more
blind for the light.

This to the woman : Forbear his gifts, the man's thou
wouldst hold.

Cheerfully he shall give and thou nothing guess, yet anon
he shall weigh thee in scales of his gold.

Woe to thee then if the charge be more than a heartache's
cost all told.

* * *

Thou art tempted, a passion unworthy ? Long struggle
hath dulled thy brain ?

How shalt thou save thee, poor soul ? How buy back
the peace of thy days ? If of rest thou be fain,
Oft is there virtue in yielding all ; thou shalt not be tempted
again.

* * *

Sacrifice truly is noble. Yet, Lady, ponder thy fate.

Many a victory, won in tears by her who forbore, hath
ruined her soul's estate.

Virtue's prize was too dear a whim, the price agreed to
too great.

* * *

Virtue or vice ? Which, think you, should need more
veil for her face ?

Virtue hath little fear ; she goeth in unchaste guise ;
she ventureth all disgrace.

Poor Vice hid in her shame sits dumb while a stranger taketh
her place.

* * *

Chastity ? Who is unchaste ? The church-wed wife,
without blame

Yielding her body nightly, a lack-love indolent prize, to
the lord of her legal shame ?

Or she, the outlawed passionate soul ? Their carnal act is
the same.

In youth it is well thou lovest. The fire in thee burneth strong.

Choose whom thou wilt, it kindleth ; a beggar-maid or a queen, she shall carry the flame along.

Only in age to be loved is best ; her right shall repair thy wrong.

* * *

Lady, wouldst fly with thy lover ? Alas, he loves thee to-day.

How shall it be to-morrow ? He saw thee a bird in the air, a rose on its thorny spray.

He would take thee ? What shalt thou be in his hand ?
A burden to bear away.

* * *

Women love beauty in women, a thing to uphold, to adore,
To vaunt for all womanhood's fame, a seemingly sweet
fitness of body, adorned with all virtuous lore.

Beauty, but not of the kind men prize. On that they
would set small store.

* * *

What is there cruel as fear ? A falcon rending her prey
Showeth an evil eye, but to him she loveth is kind ; her
rage she shall put away.

But a frightened woman hath pity none. Though she
love thee, yet shall she slay.

* * *

Show not thy sin to thy son. He shall judge thee harder
than these.

All the servants of Noah beheld his shame in the house
and loyally held their peace.

Ham alone at his father laughed, made jest of his nakedness.

Cast not loose thy religion, whether believing or no.

Heavy it is with its rule, a burden laid on thy back, a
sombre mask at the show.

Yet shall it cloak thee in days of storm, a shield when life's
whirlwinds blow.

* * *

As to the tree its ivy, so virtue is to the soul.

All the winter long it clothed us in leafage green, and the
forest paid us its toll.

Now it is Spring and the rest rejoice while we stand drear
in our dole.

* * *

Thy love of children is well. Yet a peril lurketh therein.

See lest thy sloth take excuse of thy fondness. Nay,
coward art thou, and thine is the pestilent sin.

Shift wouldst thou thy burden of life, the blame of thy
"might have been."

* * *

Courage we all find enough to bear the mischance of our
friends.

How many tortured souls have gone to their self-made
graves through wreck of their own mad ends :

But no man yet hath his weazand slit for his neighbour's
pain in amends.

* * *

Fear not to change thy way, since change is of growth,
life's sign.

The Child in his growing body, the Sage in his gathered
lore, the Saint in his growths divine,

All find pleasure but Age which weeps the unchanging
years' decline.

Whence is our fountain of tears ? We weep in childhood
 for pain,
 Anon for triumph and manhood, the sudden glory of praise,
 the giant mastered and slain.
 Age weeps only for love renewed and pleasure come back
 again.

*

*

*

What is our personal self ? A fading record of days
 Held in our single brain, memory linked with memory
 back to our childhood's ways.
 Beyond it what ? A tradition blurred of gossip and nurse-
 maid says.

*

*

*

Why dost thou plain of thine age, O thou with the beard
 that is thin ?
 Art thou alone in thy home ? Is there none at thy side,
 not one, to deem thee a man among men ?
 Nay, thou art young while she holds thy hand, be thy years
 the threescore and ten.

*

*

*

The world is untimely contrived. It gives us our sunshine
 in summer,
 Its laughing face in our youth, when we need it not to
 be gay, being each one his own best mummer.
 All its frown is for life that goes, its smile for the last new
 comer.

*

*

*

Europe a horologe is, ill mounted and clogged with grime,
 Asia a clock run down. Its hands on the dial are still ;
 its hours are told by no chime.
 Nathless, twice in the twenty-four, it shall tell thee exactly
 the time.

What is the profit of knowledge ? Ah none, though to
know not is pain !

We grieve like a child in the dark ; we grope for a chink
at the door, for a way of escape from the chain ;
We beat on life's lock with our bleeding hands, till it opens.
And where is the gain ?

* * *

I have tried all pleasures but one, the last and sweetest ;
it waits.

Childhood, the childhood of age, to totter again on the
lawns, to have done with the loves and the hates,
To gather the daisies, and drop them, and sleep on the
nursing knees of the Fates.

* * *

I asked of the wise man " Tell me, what age is the age of
pleasure ?

Twenty years have I lived. I have spread my meshes
in vain. I have taken a paltry treasure.

Where is the heart of the gold ? " And he, " I will tell thee
anon at leisure."

* * *

I pleaded at thirty " Listen. I have played, I have lost, I
have won.

I have loved in joy and sorrow. My life is a burden
grown with the thought of its sands outrun.

Where is the joy of our years ? At forty ? " " Say it is
just begun."

* * *

At forty I made love's mourning. I stood alone with my
foes,

Foot to foot with my Fate, as a man at grips with a man,
returning blows for blows.

In the joy of battle " 'Tis here " I cried. But the wise man,
" Nay, who knows ? "

At fifty I walked sedately. At sixty I took my rest.

I had learned the good with the evil. I troubled my
soul no more, I had reached the Isles of the Blest.
The sage was dead who had warned my fears. I was wise,
I too, with the best.

* * *

What do we know of Being? Our own? How short
lived, how base!

That which is not our own? The eternal enrolment of
stars, the voids and the silences!
The enormous might of the mindless globes whirling
through infinite space!

* * *

The infinite Great overhead, the infinite Little beneath!
The turn of the cellular germ, the giddy evolving of life
in the intricate struggle for breath,
The microbe, the mote alive in the blood, the eyeless atom
of death!

* * *

Yet which is the greater Being? We have dreamed of a
life-giving God,
Him, the mind of the Sun, the conscious brain-flower of
Space, with a cosmic form and abode,
With thought and pity and power of will, Humanity's
ethical code.

* * *

We have dreamed, but we do not believe. Be He here,
be He not, 'tis as one.
His Godhead, how does it help? He is far. He is blind
to our need. Nay, nay, He is less than the Sun,
Less than the least of the tremulous stars, than our old
scorned idols of stone.

For He heareth not, nor seeth. As we to the motes in our blood,

So is He to our lives, a possible symbol of power, a formula half understood.

But the voice of Him, where ? the hand grip, where ? A child's cry lost in a wood.

* * *

Therefore is Matter monarch, the eternal the infinite Thing,
The "I that am" which reigneth, which showeth no shadow of change, while humanities wane and spring,
Which saith "Make no vain Gods before me, who only am Lord and King."

* * *

What then is Merlyn's message, his word to thee weary of pain,

Man, on thy desolate march, thy search for an adequate cause, for a thread, for a guiding rein,

Still in the maze of thy doubts and fears, to bring thee thy joy again ?

* * *

Thou hast tried to climb to the sky ; thou hast called it a firmament ;

Thou hast found it a thing infirm, a heaven which is no haven, a bladder punctured and rent,

A mansion frail as the rainbow mist, as thy own soul impotent.

* * *

Thou hast clung to a dream in thy tears ; thou hast stayed thy rage with a hope ;

Thou hast anchored thy wreck to a reed, a cobweb spread for thy sail, with sand for thy salvage rope ;

Thou hast made thy course with a compass marred, a toy for thy telescope.

What hast thou done with thy days ? Bethink thee, Man,
 that alone,
 Thou of all sentient things, hast learned to grieve in thy
 joy, hast earned thee the malison
 Of going sad without cause of pain, a weeper and woe-
 begone.

* * *

Why ? For the dream of a dream of another than this
 fair life
 Joyous to all but thee, by every creature beloved in its
 spring-time of passion rife,
 By every creature but only thee, sad husband with sadder
 wife,

* * *

Scared at thought of the end, at the simple logic of death,
 Scared at the old Earth's arms outstretched to hold thee
 again, thou child of an hour, of a breath,
 Seeking refuge with all but her, the mother that comforteth.

* * *

Merlyn's message is this : he would bid thee have done
 with pride.
 What has it brought thee but grief, thy parentage with
 the Gods, thy kinship with beasts denied ?
 What thy lore of a life to come in a cloud-world deified ?

* * *

O thou child which art Man, distraught with a shadow of
 ill !
 O thou fool of thy dreams, thou gatherer rarely of flowers
 but of fungi of evil smell,
 Poison growths of the autumn woods, rank mandrake and
 mort-morell !

Take thy joy with the rest, the bird, the beast of the field,
Each one wiser than thou, which frolic in no dismay,
which seize what the seasons yield,
And lay thee down when thy day is done content with the
unrevealed.

* * *

Take the thing which thou hast. Forget thy kingdom
unseen.

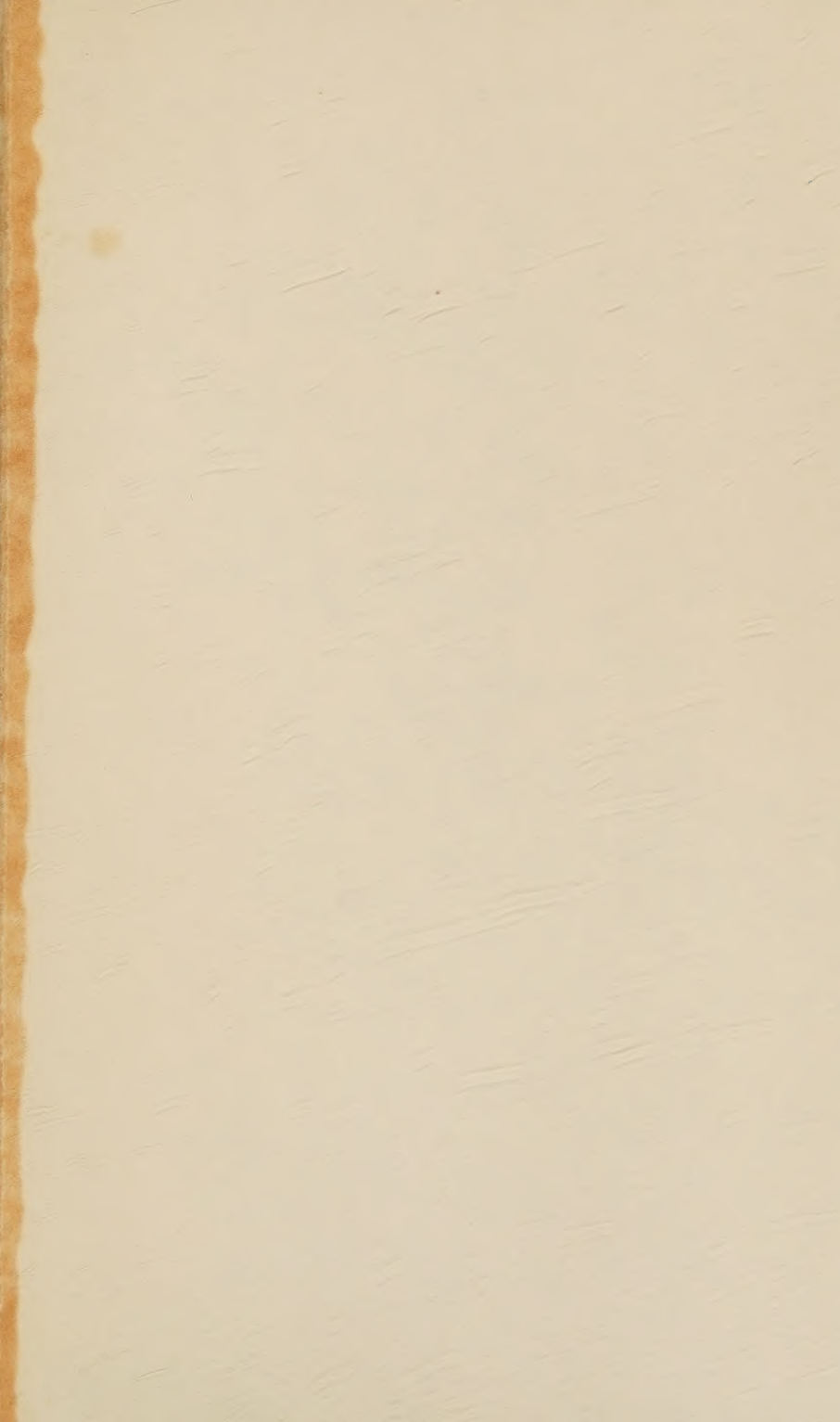
Lean thy lips on the Earth ; she shall bring new peace
to thy eyes with her healing vesture green.
Drink once more at her fount of love, the one true hippocrene.

* * *

O thou child of thy fears ! Nay, shame on thy childish
part

Weeping when called to thy bed. Take cheer. When
the shadows come, when the crowd is leaving the mart,
Then shalt thou learn that thou needest sleep, Death's
kindly arms for thy heart.

THE END



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